

ONAWAGO

-OR-

THE BETRAYER OF PONTIAC

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The Betrayer of Pontiac

BY

WILL CUMBACK LUDLOW

ILLUSTRATED BY
IRENE MULL-MARQUARDT

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WILL CUMBACK LUDLOW

Frontispiece

PREFACE.

ENGLISH Literature as a whole has been divided into different Periods, each Period being characterized by some peculiarity either in thought or structure or both; but just how to classify Twentieth Century Literature, that which is being created today, is a problem beyond contemporary critics. Are we creating a literature that will stand the test of time and become classic, are we reflecting the peculiarities of our own times, or our own manners and customs, reflecting the great movements that are making or have made history? These questions none but future generations can answer. Like every age, we are producing a lot of so-called light literature, that which pleases for the moment and then is as completely forgotten as if it never existed. Efforts along such lines are useless, worse than useless as far as posterity or the uplifting of mankind is concerned. Such authors write for the immediate return, such return taking the im-

mediate form of dollars. Their ambition has been realized, why should they be remembered? There are men who write because they have the inspiration, because they love to write, because the Muse will not be stilled. Such men produce something worthy of their efforts, something worthy the perusal of their fellow-men, something worthy the study of the men and women as yet unborn.

There was a period in American Literature when the historical novel held sway; then this gave way to what critics and authors were pleased to call "Realism." The "realistic novel" has seen its day and is among the things that are passing to the realms of oblivion. The historical novel is again coming to be the great source of dissemination of certain kinds of facts. This kind of literature is here to stay so long as the human race delights to read of the struggles civilization has had in establishing the present order of things.

Onawago belongs to this latter class of literature. In its pages we find portrayed in vivid pictures the development of the Middle West. These pictures are based on actual fact, nothing is exaggerated, nothing too highly colored. The author has tried to set forth the early struggles of the white settlers in

Michigan. He has searched all available records, read whole libraries that he might the more truly arrive at fact, has personally studied the topography of the country in which the scenes are laid; in fact, he was intimately acquainted with every square foot of the country in which the action takes place. Therefore no errors of any kind will be found in his descriptions of localities.

Will Cumback Ludlow was a friend to the American Indian, and no man of the Twentieth Century was more intimately acquainted with the peculiarities of the real Indian than he. He was interested in their history, in their manners, customs and everyday life; further, he was interested in their present and future welfare. He delighted to throw side-lights upon their history, their ancient life. So zealous was he, so true a friend to the Indian that at times he incurred the good-natured ridicule of his friends who often accompanied him in his researches afield. But he took all this "chaff" with the calm, serene spirit that ever marks the true exponent of Truth. He admired the Indian character as it is today, a mixture of the vices of both white and native American, but he admired more the character of those sturdy Indian heroes who fought

and died for what they considered right as against the encroachments of the so-called superior race, the the White man. In his tale of the early settlement of Michigan, the author has chosen such an Indian hero for one of his characters, not because he was such a hero, but that more historic fact might be placed before the reader, that a truer narrative might be recited. Historic truth is that at which the author aims. Being no respecter of persons, nor biased by outside influence and race difference, the author has two objects in view, viz: to relate historic facts, to tell a pleasant and entertaining tale.

Onawago was a growth, not a spontaneous creation. Being an indefatigable worker, the plot was worked over many times; each chapter was remodeled, yea, each line criticised and compared until no error or flaw existed. It is a work of years, a work that cost the author his life, so hard did he work to be exact, to be beyond the reach of critics and reviewers. Into this work the author placed all he possessed—his life—such is the cost of production. His shorter productions and articles number many, but it was in the development of this work that the author shows of what “stuff” he was made. Under the great brain pressure and hard work the physical gave way and

the real author was merged into the Great Unknown.

The author lived only two weeks after he had announced that Onawago was finished; in the prime of youthful vigor the silver cord of life was snapped almost instantly and our beloved Will was with us no more.

After four years we cannot yet realize that he is gone into the great Eternity and that only his works live with us. There are some things to which we cannot reconcile ourselves and this is one of them—that Will C. Ludlow is gone. We offer this last tribute of love to him. If he wrought so nobly in his early youth, what would the mature man have done? Yet some of our greatest authors produced their best at the early age of nineteen. Our beloved friend strove for one thing,—justice and truth for the American Indian and this he sets forth in his work. May it become a classic of more value than any that has preceeded it.

Will Cumback Ludlow was born July twenty-third Eighteen Hundred and Eighty-five. He did not inherit a robust physique and from childhood was a great sufferer; but in spite of all physical ills, he cultivated a sunny disposition and pleasant manners. From earliest childhood he loved outdoor life, the

woods and the denizens thereof. He was the friend of the wild animal as well as the Indian. Nature was his special study and delight. From about the age of ten he began to spend as much time as possible in the woods, living the "simple life" and close to Mother Nature. It was this kind of life that lengthened his life to what it was. Each year he used the gun less and the camera more; the thirst (if I may use the expression) for blood or the "sportsman's fever" became less as he came more thoroughly to know the nature of the animals of the forest. The better he knew them, the more he respected their instincts, desires and mode of living. "The gun less, the camera more" was his favorite saying as we often trudged through the dense forest into the habitat of the wild animal.

We may say that practically twelve years of his life were spent in the open air studying Nature and Nature's children. His spare moments and nights were spent writing upon the subject that occupied his mind during the day. Nothing ever escaped his notice.

He was a true and exact observer, never jumping at conclusions or imagining things as do so many naturalists. Many is the day we have spent together in

the woods, never firing a shot during the whole time, but just observing the movements of birds and animals. In fact, we never used our rifles except to procure food.

Our friend did a great deal to put an end to pot shooting and he did all in his power to put to flight that pest of the forest, the "game hog". "If you must shoot, give everything a fair chance for its life," was his theory on hunting. Such was Ludlow in the wild. As boy and man, nothing can be said but praise for his gentlemanly bearing, his sincere regard for others, his love for a "square deal."

In the midst of his efforts, his physique gave way and he died of hemorrhage of the brain, October Nineteen Hundred and Seven, deeply mourned by his host of friends. The one who misses him the most is the one who took the deepest interest in his welfare and ever encouraged him in his chosen career. That one is his mother, the truest and sweetest of mothers that it has ever been my lot to meet. Trained and encouraged by such a mother, our friend could not do otherwise than succeed, though the path looked stony and full of lions at times. One word from his mother, and Will took a new hold upon the difficulties in his way and usually the mountain was

a mole-hill, the lions only fleeting shadows. None can mourn the loss of a noble son more than a true, sympathetic mother; none needs so high praise as that same mother who brings to manhood this same son and makes him a power in the world.

Will C. Ludlow certainly was a power that has been felt all over this land in the chosen field of his effort. How much of this he owes to his mother, how much to himself, none can ever tell.

The friends who are left behind feel that there is a gap that can never be filled, the silver cord is broken beyond all hope of repair in this world. Let us all lay a flower of tribute upon his tomb and trust that his efforts have not been in vain.

J. O. KINNAMAN.



"WE-WON-A-ISSA"

PROLOGUE

THE BETRAYER OF PONTIAC

THE BETRAYER OF PONTIAC

THE wan brilliancy of a sallow half-moon streamed down upon the slumbering garrison of Fort Detroit. It was the night preceeding that memorable May 7th, 1763. Peace and absolute quiet brooded over the world. A solitary sentinel stationed at a stockade gate, whistled softly the air of an old English folk-lore. Naught else but the ceaseless chant of the frog chorus over in the marsh, broke the hushed sublimity of the Spring night,

Not even so much as a single ray of candle-light was visible among the several score of log dwellings of the French-Canadian settlers scattered about within goodly distance of the defences of the Fort. The small village reposed in utter darkness, as if deserted.

Circling in a broad sweep behind it ran the forest, gloom-wrapped and forbidding beneath the ghost-like splendor of the moon-beams; when suddenly — well-nigh midnight—the mellow strains of a whip-poor-will came floating from within its gloomy solitude.

A solitary pedestrian immediately emerged from the nearest stockade gate. His British uniform evidenced that he was an officer of the garrison. He walked rapidly and with lengthy strides straight in the direction of the calling bird. He entered the forest where it bordered the river below the fort, and was lost to view within its shadow. The whip-poor-will was heard to call no more.

Along the river, the last smoldering embers were whitening to ashes in the campfires of the Indian villages. There were three of these villages. Farthest up stream stood the Ottawas. Two miles below and directly across-river from the fort, lay the Wyandot village; while just below the fort and on the same bank, reposed the Pottawatamies.

Not a human presence moved about among them. Even the dog-packs for once were hushed. The same profound peacefulness and quietude brooded here as over the slumbering garrison. Yet not with sleep did the villages lie thus enwrapped in peace and quiet. Though the silence there was oppressive in its breathlessness, yet the very atmosphere was surcharged with the spirit of unrest. With nerveless impatience for the morrow's sun, two thousand braves pitched uneasily within their blanket-rolls.

Yet throughout that vast array of darkened lodges, not a human presence moved abroad—not one of the sleepless warriors ventured from his lowly bed. Pontiac's law had gone abroad that nothing should move for the remainder of this night—his law engendered of a sudden whim, a whim lest the Great White Chief at the Fort might become suspicious because of the uncurbed pow-wows of the earlier evening, and especially if prolonged throughout the night. Therefore had his order gone abroad that naught should move tonight.

Meanwhile from one village to the other, alone, prowled a solitary figure. He scowled darkly in deep meditation as he stalked about among the hundred or more lodges of each village. Several times at as many different lodges he spoke aloud, and each time a voice answered from within. Several times someone sought him in counsel, but as many times he sent them back to their beds with a bitter rebuke. He alone was free to go and come this night. None other might stir abroad. Thus had the Otter commanded, he the Great Emperor of the West, Pontiac, Great Chief of all the Ottawas, Chippewas and Pottawattamies, and of all the nations of the lakes and rivers of the North * * * * proud,

vindictive, warlike and easily offended. * * * * *

One alone among his subjects heeded not his bidding. Shortly after midnight a sixteen-year-old Ojibwa maiden, foster daughter of the Pottawattamies, glided stealthily and noiselessly among the lodges of the Pottawattamie village. She lifted the door-flap of a mat wigwam and stole within. In a moment she reappeared, bearing in her hand a pair of brilliantly embroidered moose-hide moccasins.

She reached the out-skirts of the village where she paused a moment. Then sweet and clear, the treble of the whip-poor-will trembled upon the night. In answer, someone spoke within the gloom of the trees. Running lightly forward she approached a uniformed figure standing silently at the foot of a massive red-oak.

"So you are back already, little girl," spoke a strong masculine voice in English. "You are swift and silent as the wings of the bird whose name you bear."

Without answering, she glided close beside him and placed the moccasins in his hand.

"Tell Beeg White Chief dat Whip-poor-will send um dese. Go now, you; go home to Fort now. We-won-a-issa go back now, too."

“Ah, but little girl, I have no pair of beauties such as these made by your dainty hands. Am not I so deserving of a token of friendship even as the Major himself? I have not a single gift from your hand, Catherine, not one thing to tell me that you care for me. Come, have a pair ready for me when I come tomorrow night.”

“We-won-a-issa——” she faltered, then ceased speaking altogether.”

“We-won-a-issa is the Voice-of-the-Night. She it is who sings when the day is done. She is like no other; she can fly among her sleeping people and they do not awake. She it is who can meet her lover when she will and the world be none the wiser. She alone can bead and sew so deftly and with such taste that the Great Father of the Fort will wear no other moccasins but hers. And yet—yet even when her lover begs, she it is who can refuse him even a single pair of worthless moccasins!” This with quiet banter in his tone; then softer: “I am going now. Good-night, little girl, come.”

She slipped close before him and laid a hand tenderly upon his shoulder, gazing up into his face. He stooped and placed a kiss lightly upon her forehead.

"No go," she whispered softly. "No go. Listen. Whip-poor-will mebbe make um moccasins—mebbe not."

"And why 'mebbe'? Does my little girl really not care for me any more?"

Suddenly she went a-tremble with excitement. She seized the Englishman firmly by the sleeve and was urging him to follow her.

"But why—where is it you go, little one? You make as though to lead in the direction of the Otter's own village. Yours is farther down-river. I have no business near the Otter's people this time of night. Tell me what you mean by this—why this sudden excitement of yours?"

"We-won-a-issa go to Big Chief. Tell him love you. Find out."

"Find out! Find out what? What in the name of Heaven would you find out from Pontiac about your loving me? Come, foolish little girl, what do you mean? Nor will I go a step farther till you tell me!"

"O no, no stop! Come! We-won-a-issa go to Pontiac. Find out. Den you know too. Come."

"Not one step, I swear, till I understand what on earth you are getting at—what you mean by chasing

me along like this to the Otter to find out some crazy thing about me. Here's far as I go, not one step farther!"

She sank to her knees in mute appeal to him. He laughed, leaned over, and seizing her none too gently by both shoulders, raised her forcibly to her feet.

"Now you stand up here and tell me what the devil you mean by these damnable actions! Tell me—tell me, I say! I'm through fooling now. Tell me—or I'll split your bloody head open!" and he flashed his sword from its scabbard. She turned and would have fled had not he grasped her roughly by the shoulder and jerked her back beside him,—when——

"The English are dogs!" she hissed venomously in the language of her people. "When the Whip-poor-will sings again there will be not one cur of them left! Howl!—for it is the last time you will be heard!"

Something small and glittering flashed in the moon-light. The Englishman saw it in time to seize her wrist. With a subtle twist he wrenched it from her and deposited it in his pocket.

"Now go, you little red devil. I've a sound

notion to run you through for this treachery. I'm damned if I wouldn't if you weren't so bloomin' well-standing with the Major."

Already she was gone, vanishing as it were, within the shadowy gloom of the trees. For an instant the Englishman stood dazed, then uttering a sharp exclamation, he suddenly wheeled about and rapidly strode through the forest in the direction of the Fort.

"My God!" he muttered, "My God! I must inform Major Gladwyn of this. We're every one of us doomed if I don't. I believe it's treachery, sure as the shades! 'When the Whip-poor-will sings again there will be not one cur of them left!' That's the meaning of Pontac's 'brightening the chain of friendship'; tomorrow it will be done with blood for polish. And they've filed the muzzles off their guns. When they danced this evening, I told the Major I liked not the look of things. Great Heavens, can't I walk faster than this!"

Then he broke into a run.

An half hour later, Major Gladwyn, the commandant, learned that which, next day, saved the life of every soul within the walls of Fort Detroit.

Whip-poor-will, after leaving the Englishman, hastened toward the camp of her foster tribe, the

Pottawattamies. Her small hands clenched in nervous anger. Her bosom heaved spasmodically. Savage fire glittered in her large, dark eyes as she muttered incoherently under her breath:

“The British dogs! Let them die, every one! Tomorrow We-won-a-issa shall laugh when she hears her lover groan. She shall gloat with the young men over his scalp. The palefaces are driven back into the sea! When the Whip-poor-will sings again there will be not one cur of them left!”

She entered the Pottawattamie village, gliding surreptitiously toward her own teepee. She had almost reached its shelter, when she crouched low suddenly, motionless, huddled close against and within the shadow of a bark wigwam. The tall, dark figure of a man, close-muffled in a heavy blanket, wandered in and out among the lodges, slowly bearing nearer to where the Ojibwa maiden, fearful, crouched within the wigwam's protective shadow. She scarcely breathed lest her breathing be detected. She dared not attempt to slip away lest she be recognized—although as yet she could not discern the person of the prowler to the extent of recognition.

As he strolled about among the lodges, gradually

he approached her. A strange glow came into his deep-socketed eyes as he discovered her crouched almost at his feet. He struck her a blow with his moccasined foot, and reaching down, laid hold upon the long strand of her hair. She glanced upward as he stooped above her; then shrank closer still to earth, recoiling and trembling like a frightened doe. Agonizing dread grasped her heart. She was mindless of the physical pain he might inflict—even though this mighty one had jurisdiction to the power of death among all the tribes and nations of the North. Instead, she feared the awful curses of his wrath. For in glancing upward, she had looked into the dreaded eyes of the mighty Otter himself.

This fear tended to usurp her physical pain as he raised her—raised her at arms-length solely by means of her braided hair—raised her until she swung suspended from the ground. A score of conflicting emotions played upon his dark visage. His splendid physique quivered with pent passion that for the moment seemed ungovernable. She had disobeyed his law. The penalty was death. Several times he made as though to strike her, Then suddenly he flung her from him—flinging her with his powerful

arm upon the ground at his feet where she lay swooning in a shapeless huddle.

"The Voice-of-the-Night shall be no more," he thundered in the Ottawa tongue. "Thus says the Otter, and the Mighty Manitou himself trembles when Pontiac speaks. The Voice-of-the-Night is now no more. The song of the Whip-poor-will is silenced forever; no more shall the Night-Voice sing unto her tribe. No longer are you We-won-a-issa, Voice-of-the-Night."

"You are now the Prowler-of-the-Dark. Your song henceforth shall be but as the wailing of the winds, the howling of wolves, the hooting of owls. You shall speak with the squall of the panther and the screech of the lynx; you shall skulk about among them and they shall know you as one of themselves. For you are now The-Prowler-of-the-Dark. Thus speaks the Otter to the Great Manitou—ON-A-WA-GO, PROWLER-OF-THE-DARK."

Thenceforward, for nearly a century, misty, indefinite rumors breathed of one with occult power. From the different Indian nations occupying that vast territory of the Great Lake region came these

NOTE: Proper pronunciation of this word must be as follows: First 'o' sounded as 'o' in "odd"; first 'a' as 'a' in "away"; second 'a' as 'a' in "water"; and last 'o' as in "go."—ON-A-WA-GO.

wild and mysterious tales. They circulated from tribe to tribe and were cited often and again to European adventurers from time of earliest settlement. Gradually these tales assumed the semblance of legend—fanciful as they were in their semi-mythical guise—until at length they became credited as such by those who gave ear to their weird fantasies. Yet, forsooth, they grew of goodly origin. Even into the dusky confines of council lodges they gained narration. Elderly sages and swarthy chieftains were oftentimes wont to relate them while the blue-grey smoke-wraiths of the peace-pipe curled slowly upward with fantastic languor through the shadowy gloom of the council-wigwam.

On such occasion they would gather in grave conclave, their austere attitudes and savage features denoting reverential awe, while among them some dignified member would solemnly arise and in guttural monotone give elaborate account of some recently performed “Big-Medicine” of one—ONAWAGO—the great woman witch-doctor of the Pottawattamies.

BOOK I

THE TOTEM OF THE EYE



"'Tis your chance of a lifetime."—Page 25

CHAPTER I.

THE MORNING OF THE POTTAWATOMIE
EXPULSION.

THE absolute darkness which heralds approaching dawn was becoming diffused with a slight pallor on a morning in early October, 1838, rendering objects discernable in the semi-darkness, when a birch canoe shot across the river in the small harbor of St. Joseph on Lake Michigan, and landed on the sharp angle of the sandy beach where the river joined its flow with the waters of the lake, opposite the town that quietly reposed on the southern side of the river's mouth. In the stern reposed a middle-aged Pottawattamie Indian, while a younger man, crouched farther forward, forthwith proceeded to disembark.

“So, Moccasin, you’re bound an’ determined to not go! Well, that’s jest the way wit’ you Injuns. But mind ye, red-skin, ’tis your chance of a life-time. For seldom does a man like me ask one o’ yer people—an’ ’specially one he knows but through hear-say, to keep him company fer a winter! But

even so, y'll find me with open hand should y' change yer mind."

"Good!" ejaculated the Pottawattamie; and swinging his canoe suddenly about by a gentle twist of his short paddle, he darted back across the river and was soon swallowed up in the still prevalent gloom and the mists that rose off the water.

Bundy stood in grave attitude and watched the form of the Indian slowly fade within the river fog. "Fine Injun thet, fer an Injun," he muttered as he turned away. His course lay northward, up the lake, and as he walked along, he kept close to the gentle swash of the water, for there the sand was compact as a beaten path,

"A body o' sojers arrived yester' evenin' and I'd like to know their mission. Wonder if they have hired the red-skin fer a guide. An Injun allers keeps his mouth shet 'n' 'specially when he reckons a feller's a mite curious."

An hour went by and the day broke clear and calm. Another hour elapsed and yet another; still Bundy plodded doggedly on, sweltering under the weight of his impedimenta and the scorch of the October sun. Another hour elapsed, and still the redoubtable Bundy plodded resolutely onward with-

out a halt. By this time he had covered no mean number of his many mile journey. But it was now that he suddenly started because of a grating upon the sand behind him. Apprehensively he wheeled about, grasping his rifle to "ready;" but simply confronted the complaisant Moccasin crouched in the stern of his canoe.

"Goin' too," declared the Indian in so gruff a guttural that it conveyed the impression of a grunt. "Gottum heep good place t' live—trap—fish—hunt, Mebbe farm leetle too."

"How now!" protested Bundy, "just these here few hours back ye denounced my place no good!"

"Listen," and the Indian's voice was lower and softer than usual. "Me not go with you. You go with me now, dis time. Beaver—otter—bear—heep good place; lots trap, fish, hunt."

The loquacious Bundy again started to object, but the Indian, preferring to let circumstances be expositor, impatiently motioned him into the canoe. Yet through these simple abbreviations Bundy deciphered considerable. In the first place the Indian had for some reason changed his mind within the last few hours and was now desirous of Bundy's company during a winter's trapping. Bundy believed that the

territory in question must be one with which he was altogether unacquainted, even through fellow trappers.

So, complying with the Indian's command, Bundy deposited his accouterments in the bow of the canoe, and shoving the light craft from shore, sprang in, himself. Assuming a position in the center and availing himself of a spare paddle the Indian had provided for the occasion, he lent himself to the paddling and with his aid the bark canoe seemed to strain in every fibre as it glided across the water.

Only a faint breath of air flitted over the lake, fanning little ripples in the otherwise glassy sheen that lay broken only by a long, low swell, the last visible trace of a recent storm, that slowly lifted and fell upon the bosom of the Great Lake. Now and then a scolding flock of gulls, startled from their rest upon the water, arose with harsh clamor and retreated farther seaward. Occasionally the discordant and shrill cry of a solitary bird, hovering over the water, interrupted the morning quietude; while the inarticulate swish of the paddle and the rhythmic gurgle of water at the bow of the canoe, were the only other sounds that came to their ears. Naught else broke the monotony of the morning—simply the sun-lit

sweep of shining sea, the long, white line of gleaming strand and a long reach of the high clay bluffs frowning austerely down upon them. At intervals they spoke, but their conversing was, as a rule, some short-cut sentence. The morning passed and not a human being did they see, nor a woodland denizen; naught of life besides themselves and the innumerable hoards of sea birds and water-fowl.

The noon-day sun was blazing when Bundy, consulting his shadow which fell directly in his front, addressed his companion:

“Well, Moccasin, my inner promptings insist that we push to shore and fall to in due form upon the all-sustaining. See, ’tis now mid-day, and long before the sun I had but a reasonable fill. ’Tis a buck—noble as ever shed antler—here in my pack, that furnishes us with a piece of his carcass on which to pacify ourselves.”

The Indian remained verbally silent, but instantly the canoe swung landward. At the same time Bundy heard an exclamation of surprise uttered by his comrade; and, directing his eye to the quarter prescribed by Moccasin’s dictating finger, descried a minute dark spot far to southward, close out from shore.

For quite a minute, both riveted their attention upon it; yet neither spoke.

Seldom is the atmosphere of southern Lake Michigan perfectly clear. A haze usually hangs there, blurring the distinctiveness of horizon and deceiving the eye as to actual discernment of distance, illusively placing an object farther away. Thus now that afar off the southward shore seemed miles further away than in reality. Yet even so, 'twas certainly a craft of some description.

It was after they had landed and were seated cross-legged upon the stainless, warm, sun-beaten sand of the beach, while each was applying himself dexterously to the appeasing of that appetite characteristic of the woodsman, that suddenly and unexpectedly the Indian spoke in his customary reserved tone, though resorting to the native tongue of the Great Algonquin nation as more emphatic and expressive than was English in his command, and which Bundy readily understood sufficiently to reply herewith.

"Many winter's snows have come and melted away since my people last dug up the hatchet against the palefaces. Many lives will come and pass away and my people will still smoke the calumet in their council-lodges with their enemies. They fear to turn

the palm away. They no longer are warrior-braves; they are cowardly curs. My tribe is broken like wind-fallen oak; the members are scattered as leaves. The same moon shines in the heavens that shall look upon them wandering in hunting-grounds far past the Great Flowing Water. My people go, but Shakwaukakuk stays. The Great White Father in Detroit says: "Go!" They fear him and obey. But the son of Topinabe stays."

"Then did I actually understand you to mean that Governor Mason at last has ordered your tribe's banishment after holding off so long?" asked Bundy in the same tongue.

"The Moon of Falling Leaves will not sleep before the Great White Father's will shall have been done. His pale-face warriors drive my people in a drove like sheep to unknown hunting grounds in the Land of the Setting Sun. But Shakwaukakuk stays alone. He will not turn his face to a land he does not know. Rather will he live like a hiding bear in the woods he loves. Rather will a son of the Great Warrior Chief Topinabe die than be disgraced and a coward."

"Ah, then, that was why you changed your mind this morning; that was the mission of the soldiers.

Mayhap in yonder canoe is more of your people who, like you, will not be driven from the lands they love. If I do say it, Moccasin, your people are a scoundrelly set, blackguards and vagabonds, almost every one of them. If there were more of them like you, 'twould be far better."

"But the white man is a thief," exclaimed the Pottawattamie with sudden vehemence. "Why does he want the earth?"

Bundy laughed and evaded reply by expressing a desire to be journeying onward, now that the meal was ended. But the Indian replied by waving an arm in the direction of the on-coming craft, and shaking his head in the negative.

"Mebbe know 'um, wait. Mebbe Pottawattamies. Mebbe not. Wait 'n' see 'um."

The habit of making the acquaintance of any fellow way-farer is a practice and could almost be termed second nature of the hunter and the frontiersman. Therefore Bundy needed no further solicitation in submitting to the Indian's desire and gladly availed himself of the opportunity to rest his fatigued body after the labors of the morning.

So following Moccasin's example, he threw himself prostrate upon the sand and before the lapse of

many minutes, profound slumber had overcome them both.

Whatever it may have been—whether caused by the barely perceptible swish of the paddle, the gentle gurgle of water at the bow, or more probably rendered by that inevitable discomfiture a sharp and searching scrutiny brings upon anyone, Bundy aroused himself even as the unknown craft drew within intelligible hailing distance. For some time Bundy reclined upon an elbow critically surveying it as it slowly approached.

There was nothing singularly striking in the general aspect of the craft. The craft itself was of birch bark, modelled and in dimensions similar to that of Moccasin's manufacture. Two French-Indian half breeds—the type commonly known as the voyageur, that most widely met with traveler of that date in the wild territory of the great Northwest—were its sole occupants. And there was nothing, forsooth about them to provoke comment; and yet as Bundy reclined there, studying the boat with the penetrating and experienced eye of the pioneer, an indefinable something impressed him as being suggestive throughout it, even before it had drawn sufficiently

close to allow him to note its one extraordinary feature.

Lying directly amidships and filling the space between the gunwhale and the waterline, gleamed a great human eye. The pupil and iris were jet black, the ball heavily blood-shot. Glaring steadfastly forward, its effect was terrible, appalling in its virulent, life-like gleam.

"A particularly queersome looking outfit, I should jedge," at length Bundy muttered. Then aloud: "Wake up there, red-skin, an' take a look at our visitors hereaway."

"At Bundy's words, both breeds started apprehensively, the one forward, instantly signaling for silence. He cautiously laid aside his paddle, placed one finger to his lips, shook his head in the negative and pointed with the other hand at what resembled a large heap of luggage in the bow over which had been thrown a black cloth.

Bundy beheld these maneuvers with astonishment, and as thenceforward the breeds evinced a desire to pass unquestioned and in silence, Bundy respected their reticence and held his tongue.

The canoe continued on its way. It crossed Bundy's front and doubtless would have proceeded

with no further light upon the mystery that lurked behind the enigmatical behavior on the part of its inmates, had not suddenly the cloth stirred from some movement underneath. Then slowly a long, scrawny arm appeared, naked to the shoulder, pointing directly upward. The naked member seemed woven in the web of cloth like some uncouth magical enchantment.

But it was for a moment only. Suddenly from beneath the cloth broke forth the wail of an infant; the apparition arm instantly vanished and the canoe continued its course up the lake.

CHAPTER II.

THE LEGEND OF THE MIAMA
GHOSTS.

Stretching for miles along the coast of Lake Michigan, huge mounds of wind-blown sand stand forth along the shore like languidly arranged battalions of a giant army, column after column and troop after troop. Gazing intently across the mighty breadth of listless waters that lap incessantly at their bases, they stand with uncovered heads and expressionless faces like mute watchers stationed by nature to guard her silent places.

Chain after chain they rise for miles low off the level country which stretches away eastward from their barren slopes. Lakewards they rise in gradual acclivities. Landwards they fall in precipitous slides. Their sand is ever shifting. Vegetation cannot for long endure. Scarce a shrub breaks the monotony and austere desolation of their slopes, and they—few that they are—cluster together in seeming sym-

pathy, thrusting their tendrils far earthwards merely to sustain the few shriveled leaves that cling to their branches.

Scattered sparsely along their summits, stunted pine or scraggy oaks strive almost in vain for existence, rearing their macerated arms toward heaven, beseeching greater livelihood for their famined trunks—while here and there amongst them, bleached and bare, stands silent in grim appeal, some long perished brother, vanquished by the tireless struggle for existence.

Deep, narrow valleys interwind among the hills, filled to a density with tangled undergrowth—undergrowth that is nigh impassable—offering a striking contrast to the desolate hillsides above them. Ivy-growth predominates there. Enormous woodbines, grape, poison ivies and various briar species writhe and twist themselves into impenetrable masses—in-vulnerable tyrants of aught their long arms may reach—and, fastening themselves upon the brush-growth or swinging into the dwarfed timber, slowly usurp their victims' scant vitality, rearing their heads high in air in defiant attitudes to their struggling hosts.

In all, 'tis well an arid waste, a region of absolute

desolation, almost destitution—worthless, fruitless, mile after mile of sand, endless unfathomable sand.

The somber shades of decending twilight were glancing athwart the hills as Bundy and the Pottawatamie that evening stood upon the lofty crest of the highest eminence of such a region. It was a gigantic dune. Its bald head reared high above the now darkened forest that, far beneath them, limitless stretched away landward. Its height commanded a panoramic view out over the surrounding country and a spectacular lookout upon the grand old lake beneath that rolled to the west, a broad sheet of limpid water, stretching far past the black horizon line, behind which now the sun had sunk. To the north and away to the south extended the seemingly endless chains of smaller dunes, one rising beyond the other, sinister in their monotonous contour of undulation.

“Not knowin’ as t’ you, but to me now, Moccasin, these wastes kinder make me feel uneasy in my narves. Can’t say as how I’m likin’ t’ hang about in their company longer’n I jest have to, and I’d like right well to know where you set yer foot fer this morning an’ why ye climbed me up this sand, sink-

ing at every step to my ankles, just to view that worthless waste."

"Look!"

The Indian bent slightly forward bringing his finger to bear in a line indicating a north-easterly direction, where Bundy saw a mile or so away, two little lakes gleaming like silver among the tree-tops.

"Dat um place," explained the Indian. "Heep good place for live, fish, trap, hunt—mebbe farm too some. Creek gotum beaver."

"So that's the place, is it? Well, I'm right glad t' know it. But I'm seein' nary creek. Where is there a creek?"

Without a word the Indian knelt upon the sand at his feet and immediately sketched with a forefinger the outline of the two lakes. Commencing at the northern extremity of either, he drew two lines representing their outlets. Soon connecting these, he followed their junction to where it emptied into the Great Lake. Indicating a particular point in the stream's course, the red-skin uttered once more the word "beaver" and arose to his feet.

But continuing, he pointed out over the leafy surface of the forest and followed in gesture the windings of the creek in likeness of the sand sketch at his

feet. And in the vast sea of leaves, a slight declination indeed was traceable in a serpentine route through the forest, substantiating its course in the direction of the mountain of sand. But at the timber's edge it terminated, no suggestion perceivable of its further flow. Moccasin vouched its course through the valley—a deep long gulley that hugged the foot of the sand mountain.

“But hark ye, red-skin, ye tell me it flows here below us? Not one glint of water can I see. I like not t’ think of yer trifling wi’ my creditin’s. Stands not to reason a creek’s likely below us here—here in this big gulley, an’ we not able t’ see a sign o’ it. ’Neath the vegetation ye say? Not likely. Yet to a sartinty ’tis dense down there and dark now, an’ I recollect now o’ seein’ the water sinking int’ the beach—but little can I believe ’twas from a creek an’ itself not t’ be seen. But maybe so—maybe so—fer strange and extraordinary happenin’s like this occur in the wilderness and this looks the place well suited fer sichlike.”

Even as he spoke, the sunlight seemed suddenly to pale and the western heavens glowed more fiercely with fire; the lake lay a metallic expanse of silver and bronze interwoven. The barrier hills rose

sullen and dark upon the landscape, outlined in inky blackness against the fiery background of the western sky. Interminably eastward stretched the forest, now a leafy canopy of gloom with solely the two luminous lakes shining from the darkness like the faces of mirrors.

"I vow 'tis a goodsome sweep one gets from here. A higher dune I never saw an' I've gone the lakes from end to end. Now I reckon if those two shinin' bodies were the eyes of a painter, I'd take me off there away. But seein' as how they're your two lakes, Moccasin, 'tis sartin 'twill be far better to camp here the night an' start bright and early with the canoe up the creek. This gulch down 'longside us is as likely a place as we'll find to pass a good night's rest in; an' if only we had'n't disposed of all that buck, we well might enjoy a meal worthy to set before Her Majesty, the newly-crowned British Queen, who, as I lately learn, just took the throne this here last June."

As Bundy cited the culminating words, he chanced to glance for the first time at his silent partner—and started with surprise upon beholding the Pottawattamie.

The Indian was poised slightly forward. His

magnificent figure was drawn to its full height, and the forefinger of his right hand was placed upon his lips, a signal for silence; his left arm was raised and directed forward and downward into the deep gully Bundy had suggested as being convenient in which to spend the night. The fading lumination of the after-glow gave a golden russet to his naturally swarthy countenance: his eye gleamed and spoke the superstitious awe evinced upon his face.

“Ugh! No go um there. Listen.”

Bundy listened attentively for some moments. Then he casually remarked:

“I’m hearing nothin’ more’n a few leaves rustlin’, Moccasin.”

“Shut up, I tell you! Keep still! Listen!”

For several minutes—for a tedious while on Bundy’s part—both men listened with profound assiduity. And while they listed, the dusk slowly became darkness. The fire of the west almost completely died away: the face of the Great Lake became a plain of bronze green. The forest behind them reposed somber and silent. The neighboring sand hills loomed spectre-like and colossal through the half-light with their hollows bathed in deepest oblivion.

Not a sound broke the stillness. Bundy was close

upon venturing again to break the irksome silence, when slowly, faintly from out the darkness of the gulch beside the giant hill, a low moan stole upon the still night air. Beginning, it was low and barely audible; then gradually it swelled to a long, piercing wail; then slowly it sank to a gasping sob—and died away.

After a period of uninterrupted quiet—a quiet so tense that not a leaf volunteered its rustle toward breaking the spell—once again the agonized groan arose, creeping out upon the still night air from the dismal recesses of the gully in the same long-drawn wail of distress as before. Increasing in volume it attained its former height of tone, but instead of abating, assumed a measure high and shrill, ascending to a demoniacal shriek, weird and wayward. For a moment it held this pitch, then slowly gave way to a sort of jerking gasp that suddenly ended in a wild and hysterical laugh.

“What is it, Moccasin? What can this thing be?”

The red-skin was gazing upon the face of the white man with an expression denoting a comingling of mirth, curiosity and superstitious awe, as dropping his voice to a low whisper, he answered in his native tongue:

"The ghost of the warrior flogs the spirit of his squaw. She begs for mercy and he laughs. Listen."

Again arose the moans. As the wail grew to a shriek and fell in turn to the exultant laugh, an icy shudder played throughout the mystified Bundy. He stood nigh aghast. Twice already within the past several hours had occurred an unaccountable manifestation of the supernatural. Being naturally of a religious and superstitious temperament, the incident of the apparition-like arm in the canoe, coupled with this present incentive, thwarted his every struggle to remain calm in spite of his rapidly increasing fear.

"Moccasin, have you ever heard this thing before? If any explanation is possible for such horrifying sounds. I would like to know it."

Bundy had addressed his companion in the Indian tongue, and the latter, replying, spoke likewise in his native language:

"A Miama once beat his squaw to death—a Miama warrior but no brave. He was a cur of a dog and a young chief of the Pottawattamies spits upon him—so!"

"'Twas here she died, here in this long, deep hole between the hills. The good spirit was angered, so here they were caused to stay. He flogs her with a

whip of twisted bark that lasts forever. She whimpers—sobs—begs for mercy. He dares not grant it and he laughs.”

Thus Bundy heard for the first time the legend of the Miama Ghosts of Indian Hollow.

CHAPTER III.

THE CRY.

'T WAS one of the opening nights of November. The dark of the moon was on, but the sky was cloudless and the stars blinked coldly through the frosty air. A thin, white mist arose slowly from off the water and drifted away into the encompassing forest as the cold settled. The small lake lay without a blemish to its glossy surface nor a glimmer of light, save the greenish reflection of the stars and an occasional few stray beams that flashed from a small campfire on the southern shore. And as these beams strayed out over the oily-smooth waters, a solitary loon, sailing composedly about, jeered disdainfully with his demoniacal laugh at their incursion on his domain.

The encompassing forest was of that type known in common as "oak openings." It's gloomy grandeur now lay wrapped in absolute quietude, and only the flickering rays of the campfire flashed a circle of pale lumination down its vistas and upward into the

frost-bronzed foliage that still adorned the trees. The fire burned in a small cleared space beside a log lodge, flooding this small space and the exposed side of the lodge with light.

No one moved about the place and a weird melancholy hovered about the lonely scene.

Hauled on land at the water's edge lay the birch canoe. The fire-light glanced upon its tawny yellow and black-patched sides. Just over the canoe suspended from an oaken bough, hung the carcass of a deer. Three dead beavers, unskinned, lay at the base of an over-spreading oak. Upon the sides of the shack was spread the pelt of a Canada lynx, while a brace of headless grouse, together with wild geese, were thrown near the door.

The fire burned low, unreplenished, until at length even a sputtering flame that had persistently clung to a resinous knot, suddenly vanished, and the ruddy glare of the coals shone like the eyes of a wild cat in the deep obscurity.

Suddenly and noiselessly from out the darkness glided the stalwart form of the Indian. Closely following, Bundy threw an arm-load of firewood upon the smoldering embers, then seated himself cross-

legged upon the ground. A long silence ensued, first broken by the latter.

"Moccasin, it seems strange; it is strange! The cry o' thet painter aint jist natural to me. 'Tain't no-wise the first time thet I have hearn 'em call in the night time upon their gods like a heathen upon his idols, er a bawlin' woman weepin' fer her dead. An' this critter, I say, red-skin, don't bawl RIGHT! 'Tis strange, I say, Moccasin; 'tis onnatural and mighty strange."

"Does my brother think the Miama Squaw comes a mile to worry him with her whimperings?" replied the Indian in his native tongue.

"I'm venturin' neither a yea ner nay. All I'm sayin' is thet strange an onnatural things ha' been happenin' since we left Joe town—strange on the way an' strange since we're here. Well ye know that this wily catamount is leaving marks—tracks they sure ain't—thet ye yerself ain't accountin' fer. Ner can ye yerself foller 'em. Look at 'em as what we found over 'cross the lake this very morning—what could ye make 'o them now. I'd like to know. Nettin' of a wicker basket! Where's thar a critter o' the woods wi' sich a foot?"

He was answered by the wild and quavering laugh

of the loon. Far down through the woods a lonely owl dolefully hooted; and afar in the distance, the woeful howling of a leader-wolf bore upon the night. Both the men for a long while remained silent.

Bundy had been intent upon his words. This was alone obvious by an involuntary and suspicious glance he continually cast into the shadowy darkness about him where the forms of the tree-trunks were dancing from the firelight. The firelight was reflected full upon his weather-beaten countenance, heightening the ruggedness of his features and betraying a palsied twitching at the eye-brows. His flint-lock reclined across his knees and his fingers nervously sought and fumbled the lock; while he ever and anon reassured himself, apprehensively, as to the state of the flint and priming. In fine, his entire demeanor was that of a man expectant of momentary action.

But on the contrary, the conduct of the Indian was of petrified intensity. He was seated on a short log a number of yards back from the fire, whose strong glare threw his whole person into view. The fire flashed full upon his tawny countenance, heightening his habitual expression of vigilance and sagacity to one of savage and wild ferocity. His dark eye,

usually glancing and restless, was now riveted upon the fire before him. His attitude was one of impressive dignity. His magnificent figure was drawn into that state of inflexibility exhibited when a startled animal strains its every sense to distinguish the slightest sound perceptible. His ears distended in their eagerness, all his mental and physical powers seemed enlisted to detect the feeblest vibration that might arise from out the stillness and blackness of the forest.

Bundy again started to speak when slowly and cautiously the hand of the Indian, raised in dissent, invoking silence—but his eyes retained their pinioned stare into the fire.

The warning was needless. For suddenly from the depths of the forest, a loud, piercing cry startled the silence, penetrating for miles down through the broken quiet of the night and reverberating in long undulating waves of uncouth sound for several seconds ere it finally died away into the forest across the lake.

Expressive terror overswept the white man's face, while that of the Indian's betrayed total dissolution of self-control. With the sounding of the cry, he sprang to his feet, standing with superstitious dread

painted upon his swarthy visage until the last lingering cadences ceased to throb in the distant, resounding fastnesses. Then he knelt, placing his ear close to the earth. For some moments he listened intently; then with face expressing the utter futility of his ingenuity, he resumed his seat.

A tense silence succeeded, during which each gazed into the wild eyes of the other in dreaded expectancy of the cry being repeated. But the forest remained in a dumber, more awe-stricken silence than before, as though all forces of the earth's mighty organism had suddenly ceased to throb.

"Thet's no painter, I tell ye, Moccasin; thet's no painter! If ye can name sich a cry, do so, but fer myself, I think it not of arth! Satan himself could not clamor more like a fiend; an' if 'taint him then sartin it is thet it's some infernal machine o' his'n fer bringin' evil unt' us."

"Does the Evil Spirit of the pale-face come to earth to whoop a frightful war-cry in the hours of the darkness?" returned the deep guttural of the Pottawattamie in his native tongue. "The Wicked Spirit of the red-skin lets his voice sleep forever."

"Whether those noises jist heard, red-skin, war uttered by the devil whom ye call the Wicked Spirit,

er whether the outcry o' hell itself, I cannot say; but I tell ye once an' fer all, that 'tis gi'n as no good omen, an' the sooner we quit these parts, t' my thinkin', the better off we'll be. Tomorrow's sun will, afore it sets, find my face turned—."

He was interrupted by the cry. Again it arose, hounding down the silence loud and piercing as before—and accompanied afterward by the same unnaturally overwrought quiescence as had previously predominated.

Then as both men listened, sickly over-awed, suddenly the forest shook with the sharp crack of a rifle. Casting a wild, tiger-like glare about him—fierce as that of the caged beast itself—the Indian slowly arose, turned, and without a word, his lithe figure disappeared within encircling blackness of the night.

Out on the lake the loon raised his wild and hysterical laughter. Away down through the woods sounded the doleful mourning of the owl; and far away—away in the distance until it came as barely audible—the chase-cry of the pack floated across the forest fastness.

CHAPTER IV

THE FINDING

ALONE, and so unexpectedly alone, Bundy sat as in a trance, scarce daring even to think. What could be the interpretation of the rifle-shot? Could it be there were others beside himself and his fellow trapper in this unbroken wilderness? Or was this latter interposition an operation of that selfsame agency that had conducted those former proceedings?

Even as he sat thus conjecturing, he started anew. Faintly from across the lake was born the peevish whimper of a small child—a whimper that Bundy shuddered to remember he had heard coupled with an incident several weeks before.

Risk—if any there should be—Bundy knew lay in remaining within the radiance of the fire. He thereupon immediately went to the canoe, lifted it to the water, stepped gingerly into it, and eased it gently from shore. Then crouched low in the stern, he let it float gradually out into the quiet waters.

• Slowly the canoe drifted out into the open lake.

Black and tall the gloom-wrapped forest loomed sinister in grim appeal against the stars, encircling with its wall-like barrier the two score acres of watery space. The air was chill, almost frosty, and the ghostly vapors hovered low over the surface of the waters. Overhead through the clear, ethereal transparency, the stars blinked coldly, shedding a steely, almost green lustre down upon the silent lake, rendering a narrow breadth of light-green light—to stand away to shore in whichever direction Bundy chanced to peer.

The same unperturbed solitude prevailed, and since the wailing of the child not even the twitter of a sleeping bird had been lifted in the tensity.

For a long time the canoe drifted slowly outward from shore; then rested immovably upon the face of the oily-smooth waters, while Bundy sat with keen senses riveted on the northern shore. For from there had sounded both the shot, the wail and the last cry.

Suddenly a series of metallic strikes sounded noisily upon the deathly stillness—also from the northern shore. Then presently a glint of feeble light gleamed through the tree-trunks and almost simultaneously a stern masculine voice challenged: “Who goes! Halt, I say, or I’ll fire, and I’ll——”

"Friend," came in answer to the deep guttural of Moccasin.

Gradually the light strengthened and Bundy, through the intervening tree trunks, could descry in silhouette the forms of two men, one, Moccasin, bent above and examining something that lay upon the ground and strong within the fire light; the other a man clad in civilian's clothes and at that moment in particular, engaged in raming a charge into his muzzle-loader.

"See here," then added the voice.

"Ugh!" ejaculated the Pottawatamie.

"And a white child at that! Very strange, seems to me—very strange. I know you 'cause I saw you over 'cross there at your fire; and I was standing right here in this spot looking across at you and wondering if I had best call you, when all to once the infernal screech bellered right in my ears. Then something moved in the dark over there where you are now—a something that looked neither human nor animal and was jumping about nimbler than a frolicking fawn. On all fours first it seemed. Then when I fired, it straightened onto its hinders and vanished like a spirit. And that there is what I find. It's

beyond me; but I'm going to stop thinking about it for it's sure getting on my nerves."

Bundy, meanwhile, had propelled his light craft noiselessly across the small expanse of the lake and by now was near as the depth of the water would allow. Stepping onto shore and drawing the canoe partially thereupon behind him, he strode over to the new-comer and genially offered a hand.

"How comes it that we have a caller to our parts," he said.

"Content yourselves as to my being no encroacher upon your stakings. I'm merely prospecting, looking about for a piece of suitable land to take up—to homestead, you understand."

"Tonight I was encamped a mile or so east of here. These infernal screechings wouldn't let me sleep. Thought it might be somebody in distress and somehow or other I strayed over here, and here I am, just as you see me—a well meaning man—hoping to make your better acquaintance. My name's Tom Arnold—no more nor less."

"An' mine's Dave Bundy, stranger, simple Dave Bundy, an' as ye e'en now put it, no more nor less. This here fellow is my pardner, the only decent, honest Pottawattamie o' the whole business. His

name's Shakwaukskuk, meaning in civilized talk, "The Open Ear," an' well suitin' too, fer ne'er was a more sarvisable pair possessed by buck or owl. He goes ginrally by the name of Moccasin, got from dealin' in their trade—that is, makin' 'em fer sellin'. I'm right glad t' make yer acquaintance, stranger, an' wish ye a hearty good-morrow, hopin' ye'll see fit t' favor us wi' yer company at our shack, uninvitin' as it is, but as ye know, woodmen hadn't oughter expect much accommodation in the way o' conveniences. But here, let's a peep at the child."

So saying, Bundy knelt beside a blanketed babe, embedded on the cushion-like leafy carpet. Eventually it proved a male child, about a year old. It was crowing and smiling and reaching out toward the fire with round, plump arms, perfectly at home with its new-found guardians. It was flaxen-haired and its eyes were large and bluish gray, and its immaculate cleanliness proved it had been tendered excellent treatment at the hands of that mysterious one in whose keeping it had been.

"But, men, what shall we do with him now he's ourn?"

"I'm considering that fact myself, sir," replied Arnold.

"Seeing I'm finder, I straightway take it upon myself to be keeper. I'm married with no children. I'll furnish him a home, poor as it may be and rear him as my own, though Heaven alone knows the the penalty or reward in store for me. But my conscience tells me that my duty lies with him, now that fate has cast him in my path—and so be it."

„Spoken well, friend; spoken well! But I can't see as how we'll prevent him gettin' almighty hungry afore we can reach a settlement. St. Joe's nearest, an' thet's a whole-day's hard paddlin' 'thout stoppin'. But I reckon he'll hardly clean starve in thet time."

"My home's in New York City and this evening while making camp, I decided this very piece of "opening" promised favorable for breaking in—more favorable than any place I'd found yet—and to these parts I determined to come. So I'll just carry it out. At St. Joe I'll take a boat to Detroit, thence on through Erie, down the Big Ditch and so—."

"Well, well, man!" interrupted the loquacious Bundy, "well, man, an' ye'll 'low me t' put in a word an' myself wi' it,—why, right well'd I like to go

along! My ol' home's i' York State, too. I'll jist sell my share o' the furs an' go wi' you, an' fer the first time in six, spend a winter amongst civilization. But some day—mayhap years from now—but some day, I, too, 'll come back and keep ye company in yer wilderness home here on the lake."

With his consummate words, Bundy stooped and gently gathering the child in his rough, brawny arms, was in the act of lifting it from the ground, when suddenly he started as though stung, gasped and uttered a sharp exclamation, his rugged, weather-beaten face betraying contorted features and a sickly pallor in the flickering light of the fire.

The bright scarlet blanket tightly wrapped about the child had, with Bundy's movements, fallen aside, disclosing the milky-white skin at neck and chest. And upon the little chest, standing out markedly against the milky-whiteness of the skin, were tattooed in heavy black, two words: "Bruce Long," while gleaming virulently underneath them as an eye of a serpent gleams in the sun—artfully inscribed in minature, and in color, stood forth that selfsame mysterious totem—a strikingly life-like human eye, black, glittering and feverishly blood-shot.

Out on the lake the loon raised his wild and

hysterical laughter. From down through the woods drifted the doleful "tu-whit, tu-who!" of the mourning owl; and from far away—away in the distance so far that it came as barely audible—the chase-cry of the pack floated across the forest fastness.

END OF PART ONE

BOOK II

THE INCANTATION

CHAPTER I

THE FORD OF THE RIVER

AS stated, I am Dave Bundy, Junior. And I was then but a child entering my ninth summer that memorable spring when we removed into the rugged wilderness of Michigan to the hardships and privations of pioneer life. Yet a robust lad even then was I, and years alone have proven the then primal foundations to a time and trouble-trying physique. Ah, yes, a boy then—with a boy's heart and soul, entranced with the toil and exposures of that rough journey by wagon all the way from our late New England home.

Well do I remember how all day from light till dark I lived intent upon every phase and new-found wonder of the trackless forest lining either side of the old Chicago road, shouting out in unsuppressed ecstasy at a glimpse of the disappearing "flag" of a fleeing deer—craning as we slowly moved along, ever endeavoring to catch sight of yon drumming partidge just back there within the protective

gloom of his sylvan haunt whence he sent his thunderous mating challenge adown the silence-wrapped woodlands.

So as the day was ever a source of joy, so was night time a terror. I liked not our hastily improvised camps along the roadside, where we cooked supper and breakfast and slept on the ground underneath the wagon-bed on rainy nights and in the open air in clear weather. For piled high with household goods was our cumbrous vehicle, impossible to unload for our temporary utility and convenience. Nor did I like the strange night-cries of the dark and lonely forest about us. And now I know that born and bred and imbued into the very uttermost depths of my nature was that restless spirit of superstition, inherited most strongly, perhaps, from father.

Two sturdy, faithful horses had we on this journey westward, two horses which were my especial delight to tend and drive, an open wagon, our household goods, and ourselves: mother, father, little sister Mary and myself.

Yet even with this simple equipage we labored from the East with but patience-trying progress, amid break-downs, wash-outs and storms, anon clearing away some gigantic forest monarch struck

by wind or lightning across the road, and once a nerve-racking episode, when our old horse, Barney, became suddenly ill.

And thus at length one humid, cloud-drooping day of late April, we neared the termination of our long, tedious journey. As usual I was driving, urging the team onward with boyish impatience, when we looked down upon a river whose axe-slashed valley denoted the sole signs of civilization we had seen for many, many weary miles. It was a narrow valley, brush-grown and overflowed with the spring freshet. A road wound up the steep hillside beyond the river's flood plain. There was no further guidance in crossing.

We halted on the hill top and viewed the prospect, unpromising as it truly was. Then we drove onward, down hill and to an almost perilous fording, I willingly resigned the reins to father.

"Wife," father observed, addressing mother, "ye recollect me speakin' o' the Paw Paw, don't ye now? Wall, this here river 's her 'n' no other. I'd know her in the dark. Empties jest above St. Joe. Trapped her one fall—les's see, must be nigh unto fourteen years ago. An' a smart haul I made from her,

too. 'Twar my third year in these parts, 'n' three afore I quit 'em."

"Now, Dave Bundy, beware ruining my feathers!" admonished mother, though with a trace of banter in her tone, apprehensive of her prized bedding—for already we were in the sluggish current of the over-flow and following with some difficulty the brush-cleared track before us. We gained in safety the river's bank, evidenced simply by little narrow, serpentine strips of land projecting above the surrounding flood. There we paused a moment. Then with a plunge the horses sprang forward and we were in the ford.

And I remember the thrill that shot through me. And I can again see mother snuggle little Mary to her bosom. Foremost upon his knees, rigid and determined, father held the faithful animals to their course. And then with a forward lunge, and we with a sidewise movement, were floating. For a moment we drifted, partly across, more directly downward with the stream's course. Then the wheels grated again upon gravel. The horses gained footing, and upon the welcome terra firma, landed us high and safe. And mother aloud breathed her thankfulness.

Several minutes more and the valley had passed

from our sight. We had climbed the hill and were again upon the level, entering a region of undergrowth as wild and desolate as that bordering the river—a state of young budded saplings sprung up from the enduring stumps of the lately devastated hardwood forest. Possibly a mile of this had been covered, when a single horseman, mounted bareback on an ungainly old gray mare, swept into view over a gradual rise of ground in our front. With reins held between his teeth, a basket swinging upon one arm and a strip of rawhide twisted into a crude whip that curled and hissed in sweeping circles above his head to descend anon and deal a cutting blow upon the flank of the terrorized animal, he rode like some demon possessed of reckless deviltry.

Even in my young mind I liked not one who would carry a rawhide. It shows brute nature better than a physiognomy can possibly portray it. And yet I mused, for this youth's features were in themselves positively a contradiction to his behavior. Yet thus it ever proved in his case.

He was a lad neighboring perchance twelve years in age, rather sparely built, yet sturdy and extremely lithe. He was clad comfortably in homespun and buckskin. His features were clean-cut and promi-

nent. His hair was wavy and a soft chestnut-brown. His eyes were blue-gray, frank and laughing. In fine, he was exceptional for his age, and in all, he was truly handsome.

As he swerved from the road in order to pass us, the basket tipped with a sudden careen, and a puppy, one of a litter of seven, fell to the ground. The lad laughed. The rawhide hissed and coiled like a serpent. A backward sweep and the stinging lash struck the fallen puppy. Its pitiful whimper smote my boyish heart, and even ere the horses had come to a standstill, I had it in my arms and held it close. While pausing not an instant, the youthful desperado dashed onward and was lost from view, headed straight for the ford on the river.

CHAPTER II.

THE BOY ON THE HORSE.

A SHORT distance farther and we crossed the elevation over which we had watched the mount of the violent youth, and there, almost to our surprise, shortly ahead lay a village. 'Twas a rude, backwoods settlement of the late Forties, built upon two intersecting lumber-roads. The round-about territory was sparsely settled as yet—still in its pioneer state, those few scattered families constituted the bulk of population for miles around in that particular section of Michigan.

Dusk was gathering as we reached this point and viewed for the first time "Barterville," the then prevalent appellation for the village shortly ahead. Lights already were streaming and flickering from the windows, shedding a wierd, melancholy glow out upon the evening solitude. And I remember our conversation suddenly ceased, and my own heart-beats and muffled breathing—filled as I was with the

excitement of this, to me, momentous occasion—were the only sounds audible to myself except the dull, rhythmic hoof-beats of the horses on the sandy road. Slow was our progress and the sun had long since set and the last, lingering shades of the after-glow cast an uncertain glimmer over drowsy earth with naught but the clouded heavens above retaining the final suggestion of faded day as we passed the farthestmost of the out-lying clearings, and slowly entered the town.

We halted before the tavern, a square, two storied frame building. Its front was well set with posts and to one of them father was intending to hitch. Next the tavern stood a long, rambling, square-fronted affair with a sign over the door: "THE VARIETY STORE," with just below this in smaller lettering: "All Kinds of Stuff. Prunes and Cheese. Post Office." These words were rendered readable by light from the blacksmith shop across the road, whose blazing forge brightly illuminated the shop's interior and threw its ruddy glow about us in a broad expanse of light that leaped and danced with the shadows of those at work. The regular clang of the sledge-hammer upon the anvil rang out with a loud and hollow metallic accent which struck the broad fronts

of the tavern and store across the road and rebounded to pronounce amid-strokes, its fainter volume.

As we halted, the proprietor of the Variety Store appeared in his doorway. With one leg thrust before the other, his hands shoved deep down into his trousers' side-pockets and leaning propped against the door-jam, his profile was drawn in inky blackness against the yellow flicker of the candles within.

"Strangers, eh?" he inquired quizzically of father. "Goin' t' settle hereabouts? Clost on the lake, eh? Wall, thet air am good land, far's I know. Kinder wild yit though. Better git nearer'n thet 't town, I'd reckon. Lot's o' likely land nearer'n thet o' yourn."

"Guess it'll suit my likin', thet I got," replied father. "Tom Arnold's thar, 'n' what's good enough fer him's good enough fer me too."

"Tom Arnold, eh? Likable sort o' man. So yer goin' t' neighbor with him, eh? Perty fur, way up thar though. Good five mile from here. Long ways off'm everybody else. But if y' like thet way o' doin', I reckon it's all well'n' good. Goin' t' spend the night wi' Si in thar?"

He indicated the tavern with a toss of the head, but was interrupted from further inquiry by the loud galloping of a horse. A second later our formerly

encountered horseman dashed through the flare from the blacksmith's forge. Instantly a head popped out the tavern's front window which I had noticed was standing propped open.

"Hi, there, you!" shouted the head. "Bring back that mare er I'll break yer bloody back!"

The lad on the old gray mare cast a supercilious laugh back over his shoulder and flung in answer a sing-song with high nasal twang: "Break it now, you old Jaw-bone; break it naow!"

The head muttered an unintelligible oath and vanished.

Yet one thing I had noticed; the lad had neither basket nor puppies, nor raw-hide. We could still hear his taunting laugh far up the road.

A moment later the possessor of the head appeared at the tavern door. It was the landlord. "Supper for four, wife!" he shouted back into the house, then came bustling over to us, welcoming us cordially to his hospitable board.

"Clean from York State. Well, I'm switched! Come right in, come right in. Make yourselves comfortable. You're right to home now, I want it understood—right to home. Nobody but Sal 'n' me;

nobody but just us two. We'll have supper in just a moment, just a moment. Excuse me—thank you, I'll go see!"

He disappeared to consult his goodly wife. Immediately the horse's galloping sounded again down the road, approaching. A moment more and the old gray mare slackened pace close alongside us.

"Who you folks lookin' fer?" brusquely inquired the boy. "Tom Arnold's place?"

"What about him?" queried father.

"I'm bound there right now," answered the boy. "If you'd like t' get there with somebody t' show you how, I'm yours without askin'. Come on, if you're goin'."

"Wall," added father, pensively scratching his head, "hadn't thought o' goin' up thar till mornin'. It's a mighty black night. 'N' it's a big two hours drive from here, 'n' nothin' but woods the whole way thar. Nope. Guess we hadn't best go till mornin'.' Thankee, all the same."

"Aw, yer scared out, yer scared out! Hain't nothin' goin' t' hurt you. The dark can't bite. Come on, I'll drive. I know the road. I'll see you there safe enough."

"Better not let Si see yer hangin' eroun' here,"

called the store-keeper to the boy. "He'll gi' y' the whalin' ye deserve ef he gits hands on yu'."

The boy paid him no attention outside a scornful curl of the lip, but sat on his horse stolid and sullen; then he resumed his attempt at persuading us to proceed.

"This old nag belongs t' old Jaw-bone here. I sneaked her this afternoon. I'm through with her now. If I don't get a ride home, I've got t' walk. Come on, 'tain't no sense stayin' here. Tom's been lookin' fer you every day for a month. Come on, he's dead anxious to see you. Come on, nothin's interferin', come on."

"What'd y'u do wi' them thar pups, scamp?" came from the store. "Bet a coon-skin ye stole 'em somewhere, thet I'll bet."

Mother and little Mary had entered the tavern. Yet anxious as we were for supper, father and I still lingered outside, debating with this strange lad. But suddenly the landlord's portly figure appeared once more in the lighted doorway. Instantly the old gray mare whirled about, plunged forward and her hoofs clattered up the road.

CHAPTER III.

THE DRIVE TO ARNOLD'S.

THE night without was black when, supper finished, I attended to the team, stabling them in a rude shed behind the tavern. I had fed and was busy bedding them down when I felt, rather than noticed, someone slip from out the darkness and lay a hand lightly upon my shoulder, standing close beside me.

"It's only me, kid," he whispered. "Don't be scared. Let that work go for a minute an' listen. Go in an' coax that dad o' yours to go on to Tom's tonight. They hain't nothin' t' be afeard of. I'll drive an' I know the road same by dark as by daytime. I just now stuck the old mare back in the yard there where old Jaw-bone'll be likely to find her in the mornin'. So now you just go on in an' coax your old man to come on an' go 'long to Tom's. Tom's dyin' t' see him. Tell him that, too. We can get there in an hour or so. Gosh, they ain't nothin' to stay here for! Tell him we might as well move along an' git there and have yer long drive over with.

Will y' do it, kid?—go in an' coax him? But don't ye dare to let old Jaw-bone hear ye say that I'm out here."

I straightway went indoors, slipped around to father's chair where he tilted back against the wall, conversing with our jovial host, and in an undertone, delivered the boy's message.

"Wall, guess we may'z well move 'long, landlord," spoke father. "The lad here's coaxin' t' go. It's nigh to eight year since Tom 'n' me ha' saw each other an' ye may be bettin' ez how I'm dead anxious fer t' see him, an' him me, I s'pose. Sorry not t' put up wi' ye the night, but the fact is, I'm in a turrible flurry t' git t' Tom's an' have this long trip done. I jest can't content myself t' wait till mornin', landlord. Dave, ye can go hitch up, lad."

Shortly we were upon the road once more. The night was utter black as we passed out the village—so black that with difficulty we found the tote-road that branched off to the right toward Arnold's. Absolute silence brooded on every hand. The regular thuds of the horses' hoofs and the dull, sullen rumble of the wagon only tended to add melancholy to this black silence about us—this unearthly, oppressive silence that dampened our spirits like a pall. On

either side of us stretched uncut wilderness; towering hardwoods loomed up beside us in shadowy silhouette against the clouded sky. No wind stirred. A fine mist in the air wafted chill against our faces until we shivered with its uncanny dampness.

I drove, seated in front, father, mother and little Mary farther a rear, perched high upon our bulky load. I drove—in that our prospective guide had failed to materialize at the wanted time. We were concerned. Positively we could never find our way through this black night without his guidance. Already we had covered some goodly distance. Would he yet appear?—or, had he played another of his sundry pranks?

Suddenly a deep, gruff voice spoke from out the dark, requesting a ride. I reined in the horses. Could there be a lonely pedestrian such a night upon a wilderness road like this?

A dim figure lurched up over the wheel—a figure that I recognized as that of the lad on the old gray mare. He laughed softly as he found a seat at my side.

“Fooled yu’, didn’t I now, with that voice I put on? Thought I wa’n’t goin’ t’ drive after all, now, didn’t yu’, kid? An’ I’ll warrant ye felt mighty

squeamish too, didn't yu'? Yu'd a never found the place without me, though, that's sure. Here, give me them lines. I'm driver here."

I hesitated. "Reckon I'll drive my own self," I answered sulkily.

"An' I reckon you jest won't!" he asservated sharply. "I'll have yu' to know that I'm driver o' this here shebang! Give them lines here. D'yn' hear me? Hand 'em over, I say!"

Someway I courted antagonism with this lad—had rebelled against his influence secretly from the first. My very innermost spirit clashed against his.

I doggedly retained the reins.

"Give yu' jest three to hand 'em over. One—two—THREE!"

He snatched at them. I jerked them out of his reach. In return he swung a resounding slap with the flat of his hand across my mouth. My blood fairly boiled. Drawing back deliberately with my utmost strength I struck him just above the ear a blow that reeled him almost off the load. But instantly he was back at me. Reaching over, he wrapped his long, sinewy arms about me, pinning mine at my side. Then raising himself, he swung me in the act

of flinging me headlong to the ground, when father's voice and hand arrested him.

"Ye imp! I'll sling ye clare t'——Don't ye dare make another move, ye varlet. Put the boy back there to his seat. Dave, I say, let him drive. He knows the road."

Thence we rode in silence, laboriously bumping along through the endless waterholes and ruts of that rough, lumbering road, the wagon jostling and careening wildly from side to side. The time dragged tediously along and it was perhaps an hour or so later that the feeble flicker of a light from a small window far on ahead, streamed down the open cut of the roadway.

"That there's Tom's," causlly remarked the boy. "Mighty glad we're here." Then after several minutes: "How old are ye', kid?"

"Nine," I answered.

"So's Martha," he snapped. conclusively.

"Who's Martha?" I queried.

"None of yer business. She's only a gal. Now d'yu know?"

"Then what's your age?" I returned.

"Hain't got no sure age, I guess."

"Then when's your birthday?"

"Never had none."

"Where do you live?" I persisted.

"No place."

"Aw, go on," I blurted out. "You're only lyin'."

"Don't yu' call me no liar, kid, don't yu' dare! I tell yu' that I don't live no place fer long, an' it's the truth. Sometimes I stay with Tom, sometimes not. Jest as I please to."

"Well, then, who's Martha—Martha who's my age?" I enjoined.

"Oh, she's nobody but Tom's gal—his only gal yu' know. She's some sort o' way my sister; but I'm not her brother, I don't figure. But what's the difference t' yu', kid, who she is?"

"What's your name," I replied, disdaining his retort

"That ain't got nothin' t' do with you. 'Tain't none o' yer business, neither. 'Tain't no name to brag on."

"What's your name, boy?" demanded father sternly.

The boy sulked a moment, then blurted out savagely:

"Hope yu'll all be satisfied when I tell yu' what it is. Must want t' know mighty hard. Now d'yu know? It's BRUCE LONG."

CHAPTER IV.

THE EVENING AT ARNOLD'S.

BRUCE Long helped me in caring for the horses. Then with them comfortable in the barn, together we proceeded to the house. But even as I laid my hand upon the door-latch, I suddenly missed him from my side. Where could he have gone so suddenly, so silently, so mysteriously as to be thus swallowed up, as it were, in the blackness of the night?

I called, but there came no answer. For some moments I waited, surprised and wondering, upon the door-step; then raised the latch-string and entered the house. I disposed of my heavy outer wraps, then quietly joined the others in the large living-room, which was ablaze with mellow light from the great open-mouthed fire-place. One solitary candle fluttered its yellow flame from the eating-table over in one corner where mother, with Mary on her lap, sat chatting with Mrs. Arnold. Father and Tom were already engaged in retrospective conversation, their

hilarious enthusiasm over being re-united after eight years separation still at full blast.

I looked about for Martha, she whom Bruce had referred to as "Tom's only gal." Upon our arrival I had been formally presented to both Mr. and Mrs. Arnold, but I had failed to notice anyone of my age or thereabouts.

Nobody seemed to note Bruce Long's absence. Therefore I made no mention of it, but quietly seated myself upon the settee near the chimney-place, and sat listening to father and Tom's discourse as they sat before the hearth, reclining leisurely back in their easy chairs and rocking measuredly to and fro, the firelight before them spreading enormous features and outlines upon the shadowy background of the large room where along the walls, fantastic gestures mimicked in frolic their natural likenesses.

"An' Moccasin, Tom? Does he yit hang t' the place?"

"Aye, Bundy, he does, and with grit like that of a wolverine. He still lives in the hut you two built over across there at the south end of the lake. You see this house stands shortly back in the woods from the spot where we found Bruce that night, and if, as you say, you have two quarters, then you certainly

have the land on which the red-skin resides. Glad will he be when he sees you once more for he speaks of you often and always as "Brother."

"An' the boy"? queried father.

"Runs wild as a famished wolf. Where he spends his time I am unable to learn, for though I've tried my best to follow him, he always seems to know it and somehow manages to throw me off his track. He outwits me at every turn.

Seldom is he at home, and where he gets his meals puzzles me. I have done all in my power for him. There is but one stone left unturned, and that is to send him to Uncle William (perhaps you recollect seeing him at my place back East sometime or other) an old, wealthy merchant, lately retired, in the Big City. When here last summer he took decided fancy to the boy, probably because of his strange history and his peculiar personality, for young as he is, he strikes me as exceptional. And strange though it seemed, Bruce also took a singular liking to the old gentleman, for while Uncle was here, the lad ceased his deviltry and was ever at the old man's side. And now Uncle wants to take him and school him. It's the best thing for the boy and the best thing for us all, so I've decided to compel

the boy to go, whether willingly or unwillingly, it matters not which, he'll have to go in season for next Fall's term."

'Twas here I noticed Mrs. Arnold turn in her chair.

"Go back, pet, and dress and then come down."

I turned quickly in the direction she had addressed, just in time to see a little white-robed figure vanish into the gloom of the stairway. Ah, that was Martha, then! She was here after all. My heart began to pound rebelliously high in my chest, almost suffocatingly in my excitement—excitement from I knew not what.

"An' how ha' ye done here i' the woods, Tom?"

"Pretty tough all around, Bundy. Things have gone against me. Deer destroy considerable of my grain every year. Scarce a fowl can I keep on the place on account of vermin. I lost my best horse before I'd been here six months. The shingle-diggin's' at Barterville have been overstocked all the time so's I couldn't dispose of my timber. And if I turn my hogs on the acorns and let them run, some of 'em will come up missing every time because of wolves and cats and bears. I've had hard fightin', Bundy, to keep things movin'."

"A good log house is this, good-sized and warm, three rooms below and two above. A good deal of land I've cleared, but I've burned most all the trees and what I've saved,—the logs are simply rotting on the place. And it's been mighty lonesome for Sallie but nary a word has she said one way or the other, though everything seems to want to go against us more or less; and yet we've managed to keep existin' away out here in this dreary old wilderness all alone, a-waiting and a-praying for someone to turn up as a neighbor, and above all in the world, waiting and praying for you. And now that you're here, I'm going to start in with new spirit. There's enough logs already down here on my place to build your house and until we get it finished, you can live with us, and welcome."

Intuitively I became aware of a presence at my side. My heart fluttered wildly as I turned to look and to find that Martha, now dressed, had slipped silently into the room, and, without attracting my attention, had seated herself upon the opposite end of my settee, gazing at me with shy, wondering blue eyes that dropped coyly before my own astonished stare.

"Are you the little boy who's come to live with us here in the woods?" she asked softly.

"And are you Martha?" I stammered in a whisper.

"And isn't your name David? Mamma said it was. David was an awful, awful good, brave boy. He's in the Bible, you know. I s'pose you're just like him or you wouldn't have his name, would you? He slayed Goliath with a pebble and a string and then was king, the Bible says. Can you slay folks with a pebble and a string?

But listen! Papa's telling a story—a queer story. Did you ever hear it before? I think it is almost as good as the David and Goliath one."

Tom was telling the story of The Cry—recounting his strange and mysterious experience of that November night. The story has already been told in these pages, but to me as a child, it ever contained a fascinating and bewildering import that set my young mind, upon every recital, to wondering upon the strangeness of it all.

The story finished as it had been finished many, many times—though somehow it seemed ever new—the conversation thenceforth lagged. The fire burned lower and lower, unreplenished, and silence

reigned over the household. Little Martha's eye-lids were heavy and drooping, but for myself, I remained wide awake, for I was preternaturally of a nervous temperament and the unbroken silence of the room grated upon me. The others sat staring dreamily into the glaring embers. Only the gusts outside howled and shrieked, increasing steadily in violence as the late hours approached. And in this continued breathless quietude, we dispersed for the night.

In the low-ceilinged, dimly-lighted bed-room to which I was conducted, I lay for a long time, my mind wandering over the day's manifold events; our peril at the ford; the singular maneuvers of that strange youth, Bruce Long; his purpose with those puppies (mine even now slept upon the foot of my bed); his daring in openly stealing the landlord's mare for the afternoon; our long ride through the dark to Arnold's and lastly Bruce's mysterious disappearance after helping me with the horses. Then I thought of the narration concerning the horrid cry which had arisen one starry night ten long years ago in this very forest around the lake. Ah, I would see this lake in the morning—this lake I had heard so much about! Thence my mind strayed to little Martha, for already it seemed, I loved her with my boyish heart. And

what is more sacred than the love of childhood? Then slowly things confused themselves; nothing seemed real, and I gradually dropped to sleep.

I awoke with a start. Someone was choking me. Bending over me I could just distinguish the outlined figure of what I took to be an undersized man. I started to cry out, but his fingers pressed my throat, shutting off my breath. A low, barely audible whisper: "If yu' make a sound, I'll strangle yu,' kid!"—and I recognized Bruce Long's voice. It frightened me, for I knew his threat was law; so I gave him no resistance as he took me in his strong, young arms and surreptitiously slipped from the house into the black, inclement night without.

But meanwhile, I had seized my puppy in my arms and borne him with me. And he, nestling close, vented not a whimper.

Then something wet and warm trickled down over my fingers, and feeling I found whence it came.

As I slept, my puppy's ears had been cropped!

CHAPTER V.

THE PROPHECY.

THE cold night wind howled about us as I followed, led I knew not whither; simply followed, bewildered, over-awed, choking back my fright and endeavoring to heed not this black darkness which seemed to close in upon us with tangible weight as though in order to proceed, we must reach forth and seize it and force it from before us. Bruce's arm embraced me, clutched about me with no gentle pressure as he literally dragged me along at his rapid gait; while my arms in turn hugged closely my puppy to my bosom.

I have no trace of time or the length of our journey. But finally, after a seeming age to me, we struck into a thicket so dense that to penetrate it, we were obliged to tear our way. At length in this entanglement of vegetation, Bruce stopped; and I, reaching forth a hand in the black darkness, came in contact with the cold, clammy side of a damp and decaying log. With a shudder I drew away from its grewsomeness, tightening my convulsive grasp upon

my puppy and with anguished sufferance, awaiting Bruce Long's pleasure.

I supposed him pausing to regain his breath and I, in turn, panted heavily, chokingly at his side. Then while we paused, suddenly I discerned that he trembled—surely not with cold for we had been walking with utmost speed. For quite a space he thus hesitated as though in doubt whether to proceed or turn back until at length he shrugged as though to be liberated from some undesired and overpowering influence, and stepping resolutely forward, touched a low door that creakingly swung slowly open. A peculiar glimmer of uncertain light fell about us; and following the example of my abductor, I stepped forward into a dusky enclosure, the door closing automatically behind me.

Before us a few smouldering coals glowed in the center of an earthen floor, shedding a weired, semi-obscurity about the place. The place itself was a square-built, bark wigwam, without a single article of furniture or a utensil—naught but bare, earthen floor and the warped and mouldering bark of the walls.

Intense, unearthly silence prevailed. Not a sound save the dull moaning of the night-wind without and the tumultuous throbbing of my own heart, broke

this unearthly silence which hung death-like about the place like the peculiar, stifling, atmosphere of a tomb. While strangely, this stifling, haunted atmosphere smote my heart with a vague, though dread intuition of human occupancy, my eyed roved restlessly about the place until at length I began believing it surely tenantless after all, when chancing to glance furtively by way of inquiry at my midnight abductor, I found his eyes resting upon the corner close behind me. Involuntarily I drew back, and turning, stood as petrified, transfixed with an unwholesome, hysterical oppression at my heart.

At first I could discern nothing further than two eyes—two eyes which were fixed upon mine with a virulent glare and burning as I have seen the eyes of felines shine in the dark. Then slowly my sight became accustomed to the gloom, and I described the lineaments of a muffled figure crouched in the corner close before me, its dusky outlines lost in the accompanying shadow. One naked arm reclined across its black garment. Coarse black hair dragged down upon it, hanging loosely from about the shoulders and enclosing a dark, menacing countenance from which glowered those penetrating, pather-like eyes.

Strange loathing incensed me. And I shrank

back horrified, my heart seeming to flutter in vacuum. And I gazed with undisguised adhorrence into those eyes—my God, those eyes; I can see them yet—which glowered still into mine.

Bruce, meantime, had released his encircling arm. And now, as I stood there, he strode forward to the fire, his tall, boyish figure outlined against the ruddy glow of the coals as he bent above them. He stirred them, raked them closer together with a small stick which he carried. Then he broke the stick in twain and threw the pieces upon the embers. Then he turned and faced me.

“Kid,” he spoke, “d’yu know that you’ve come to learn yer fate?”

As he spoke the crouched figure in the corner began to rock slowly backward and forward, crooning a kind of wordless song. Then suddenly, noiselessly, she was on her feet. Moving rapidly, she circled half around the fire and faced me from beyond. And I, fearful, cowed before those wildly lighted eyes, and slinking backward into the corner—the corner she had vacated, crouched into it. But in crouching, something I felt behind me, and reaching thereto, I brought forth and threw from me into

the center of the floor an odd sort of gun, a flint-lock musket with a ten-inch barrel.

A tiny blaze had meanwhile sprung up, emitting a sort of wierd and indistinct glow about the place that heightened the shadows and flashing upward into the face of Onawago, strongly multiplied the hideousness of her aspect. She stood in a wild attitude, bending slightly forward. Her arms were outstretched, the fingers parted as if sifting the fumes of the fire. Her long black garb fell to earth like the black shroud of some infernal habitant, coiling closely about her shapeless figure; and the firelight playing upon its many folds, added deeper shadows to its blackness. Evidently she was approaching great age. Deep wrinkles crossed and recrossed her face. A few gray hairs glistened silvery among the jet. Her cheeks were slightly sunken from missing teeth, and in all there was something remarkably repulsive, remarkably abhorrent about her—about her leering poise, about her uncouth visage, about those glowering, feline eyes.

The two sticks still burned.

Bruce, meantime, had thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and had brought therefrom something which he now was dropping one by one meas-

uredly upon the enlivened embers of the fire. And I saw each one as it fell, flare instantly into a vanishing flame; and I watched them one by one, curl and crumple together, simmer strangely, then char.

They were pup ears!

And he counted hesitantly as they fell, and the last one numbered fourteen.

My face I buried in my hands, childlike, and in my fright gave way to sobbing. I listened, too, yet heeded not nor comprehended aught of, the continuance of her medicine-incantation. Only once, out of sheer juvenile curiosity, I peered through parted fingers at her, and the picture of it all—that tableau in all its horror—lies indelible upon my memory.

All before me seemed to recede into far distance and there became an unhallowed phantasmagoria. In a setting of opaque background, Onawago posed in wild attitude. The slanting beams of fire at her feet flared about her an indistinct radiance which tawnd her skin and wrapped her swarthy body in an unholy halo—for a striking transformation in her appearance had taken place. Her black garb had suddenly been cast aside. She now stood forth unclad, her spare body decked in all the hideous splendor of her medicine raiment—aglit with gew-

gaws, aflare with banded feathers and aglow with barbarous characters in brilliant paint in the custom of her race. She stood rigid and motionless save for a slight movement of her parted lips, bending backward, her face tilted upward with eyes closed, and her long strands of loose hair falling straight downward almost to earth. Her long, emaciated arms were extended outward and upward as though invoking aid from some nether region. A heavy, dark fur, draped backward from her shoulders, caught in fastening about the throat by a necklace of iridescent sea shells that contrasted markedly their pale lustre with the swarthy olive-hue of her skin. Beneath them, sunken low between her drooping and shrunken breasts, lighted to life-like ferocity by the flickering flare of the coals, gleamed a miniature inscription—a human eye, black, glittering and feverishly blood-shot.

My face sank in my palms. I leaned forward, clutching spasmodically my puppy, my sobs dying away, for in the air close about me, a low voice, strangely familiar, spoke tremulously that which to me sounded like a judgment from the dead:

“Mighty, Marvelous, Mystic, Magic, Bloody, Wierd, Peculiar, Tragic!”

Toward the last his voice had died to a whisper. Then suddenly I was snatched into his strong, wiry arms and hurriedly borne away into the blackness of the night.

END OF BOOK II.

BOOK III

BRUCE LONG

CHAPTER I.

THE TRACK THAT LIES IN THE FOREST.

THE sickled disk of a crescent moon swung in the western heavens. Its pale beams stretched slantwise upon the waters round us, transforming their tranquil sheen to a plane of burnished silver, imbedded by the dark and silent forest. 'Twas a night, balmy and breathless, of early October, 1858; and the infinite magnificence of its autumnal glory calmed our hearts as were the waters calm upon which we floated. Not a whisper of air fanned a blemish upon the silent lake nor shook a leaf of the sleeping trees on shore through whose intervening trunks a single ray of light streamed—a candle's gleam from the Arnold home. Moccasin's lodge at the lake's southern end, reposed in darkness with not a suggestion of moonlight piercing the foliage of the mammoth trees which hovered paternally above it, silently as they had stood one November night, black and starry, when a wild cry, strangely unearthly, had

arisen within this forest, striking terror to the hearts of the two men who sat before their campfire.

Twenty long, uneventful years had dragged past since that night, uneventful, except that father was no more. Yet Moccasin, now a white-haired, hale old Indian of some sixty odd, still inhabited the same log lodge father and he had constructed those twenty years ago. And now this night of October, one of his manufacture was the dug-out canoe in which Martha and I drifted upon the moonlit lake. No longer were we children as when our family had settled in this rugged wilderness of the lake. For since that memorable night of our coming, ten years had sped away—ten years of our youth—and during those ten years we had grown, she a woman, I a man—a man in stature, a man in mind and a man in might—she a woman, old as was I for my years and the pride of my young life. Together had we sprung from childhood, schooled side by side at mother's hand, and with a stronger tie than affiliation existing between us. Six feet in my moccasins stood I now at nineteen, with the rigor and vigor of the wilderness instilled into every fibre of my strong physique.

"It seems queer to me, Martha, that the ghosts of Indian Hollow should cry last night as they cried

that evening when father listened to them from the mountain-top; for since then no one has ever mentioned hearing them, not even Moccasin. Of course, 'twas he told me of their crying last night. I wonder what father would think were he living. I have never liked the tradition. Fact is, I doubt the whole thing. I credit it merely to Moccasin's imagination. Yet father used to tell of them too, and swore that you could hear the squaw whimper and shriek so realistic that you could all but see her; and then at the end the buck would laugh exultingly when he heard her beg. But faugh! what's the sense in it all? And yet—yet 'tis strange, Martha, rather strange after all."

"Why, Dave, from the way you speak, I actually think you do half believe in them yourself. Father says it's nothing but Indian legend; probably some Miamas were murdered in the hollow sometime or other, or some such thing gave it rise. I too have news for you; Bruce Long came back this morning. Yes, on a short visit, he says. And he's fine looking, Dave; I tell you, he's fine looking. We're all so proud of him. Why, Dave, he's oh, so handsome! And such clothes! My, they're exquisite! And he brought his saddler all the way from the city. He

says it was a terrible undertaking though to get the horse through. He rode clear across from Detroit and shipped his luggage by train to Niles."

"And what does he have to say about the property?" I asked.

"Do you mean the particulars of Uncle William's will? Bruce declares that there is more property than he at first supposed and that Uncle was far wealthier than anyone realized. Ever since Bruce graduated last spring, he has been looking into the estate. And it's true that father and Bruce are the sole heirs."

"It seems queer to me that he willed everything to them," I demurred. "There were plenty of other relations."

"Yes, but up to the time that Uncle William became acquainted with Bruce Long, father had always been his sole intimate. Uncle was a recluse and of course, a bachelor. At the time of Uncle's death, three years ago, Bruce and father were still his only intimates and therefore, he created them his heirs. The estate is to be divided equally between them at the expiration of the allotted three years. The time is almost due now."

"And why this three years?" I queried.

"It was an excellent provision," she replied nonchalantly.

"At the time of Uncle's death, Bruce still had three years at college, and Uncle wisely provided that he should come to the estate after he was graduated, which, I understand, he did with the highest honors."

"Yes, but there was one other provision, so I understood."

"Certainly; that if either Bruce or father should die before the three years should have elapsed, then all should go to the one surviving. And that is simply because Uncle was determined that they, Bruce Long and father, and they only, should have the benefit of his earnings. That, surely, is well enough."

"Yes, but, Martha, it seems—it seems to me—it seems," I stammered. "I hate to say this, Martha; but somehow, I feel it somehow, Martha—I feel that you are somehow slipping away from me; that we shall never know each other in the future as we have in the past. A month more, and you will be wealthy, an heiress. Then you will turn your back upon these woods and your wilderness home for your costlier home in the city. And as for me,

Martha, I shall remain here in the woods. I have no other home—know no other home. These woods—these woods in which I have grown, constitute all of my small world, and them I love. These woods alone can I call home—and that, and that a home of hemlock logs; yours a stone mansion. I, a poor, ignorant back-woodsman; you, attending some fashionable school. My God, Martha, is it possible this can be!”

“Don’t, Dave, don’t! Don’t talk like that! I can’t endure it. You know it is hard enough already to think of going away without your making it any harder.”

“But I am only telling you the truth, Martha, this truth that lurks in my heart with an aching pang. And, moreover, I feel that Bruce—that Bruce Long, has come with more intent than a visit; that he shall take back with him far more than a mere pleasant impression of his boyhood home. I hate—I loath to say it, Martha; my God, I loath even to think it—but for your sake as well as my own, I speak; for full sure I am that he has come—that he has come for more—for more than—than a—a mere visit.”

“Tell me what you mean by this, Dave!” she exclaimed in a startled breath, her eyes alight with



The unshucked ear slipped from my grasp.—Page 108.

salient fear. "Tell me why you think he has come for more than a mere visit. Tell me. I demand it."

"I mean, Martha," I answered, my voice husky with emotion, "I mean that he has come for—for you."

She replied not.

I was bending forward, heedless of surroundings, gazing upon that sweet face upturned to the moonbeams—that face I loved so dearly, and which I now saw—and my heart sank—slowly paling. And still she replied not, though I waited breathless for an answer, while a deathlike pall settled upon my heart. And as I waited, the reigning quietude lay unbroken, while the placid smoothness of the silvered lake rippled with not even as much as the leap of a bass or the swish of a marauding pickerel.

"Son-of-my-Brother!"

We both started from our reveries. But only Moccasin and his canoe had glided noiselessly alongside our own.

"Son-of-my-Brother," he again spoke in his familiar Pottawattamie. "A new track lies in the forest. A footprint leads to the door of my daughter's wigwam—but it is not this track that lies in the forest. This track that lies in the forest touches the

earth but in spots. The footprint that leads to the door of the wigwam of Nin-don-son follows straight and is clad in the heavy leather that is made in the great cities of the palefaces. A paleface from the city it is who walks. The toe turns out."

"But, Ne-can-es, this track that lies in the forest leads in a different direction. It follows no path; neither does it step. Merely the marks of wicker-work, is this track that lies in the forest."

CHAPTER II.

LONG'S STRANGERS.

IT was the following week, and Friday. The hush and sublimity of Indian summer lay over the land; but the halcyon days were nearing their close. The afternoon was rapidly waning, and already the sun was sinking to his rest. Already a tender tone of rose was growing in the east; while just tipping the eastern horizon, wan and ghostly, swung the pallid moon. Already the lonely wail of a screech owl over in the woods, and a winging night-hawk brushed past me, low over the stubble.

I sat cross-legged husking; and the golden ears lay in small piles throughout the field, one pile to each shock. I was now upon the final shock and anxious to be through. I was working late, endeavoring to complete my fall's work somewhat earlier this season. I was facing south. Over on my left, and adjoining the corn field, stretched my timothy meadow, and just beyond it stood my log-built home. And as I rested a minute in my work a candle's

feeble light sprang from its window and streamed out upon the prescient night. And as I gazed at it, from over at the barn the hungry neigh of old Barney, impatient and wondering at his prolonged wait for his supper, came quavering out upon the still night air.

Encircling the "clearings" skirted the uncut forest, now gloom-wrapped in the shades of gloaming, while through a single vista I could discern a glint of the mirroring lake. And over to my right, against the fiery glare of the sinking sun, in black and sinister silhouette, rose the giant hill and his lesser brothers, their prosaic regularity of ridge-crest standing like great genii guarding jealously their secret solitudes. One opening alone cut its depression through their ranks—the deep gulch of Indian Hollow, wrapped in shadow, sombre and forbidding.

The forest rose just behind me; its shade already held me, and I sat with my back to the shock. I may have paused some minutes in my work; I can not state positively for I was oblivious for the nonce to self and surroundings, brooding as I was upon that which imperiled my future. Be it as it may, 'twas suddenly that I started, and the unshucked ear slipped from my grasp. A far distant sound—one

musical to the hunter-born—had struck upon my ear. Once more it came—the long, deep, drawn-out bay of a tracking hound. Again it lifted, full and clear, and I recognized old Luxor's bass.

From the moment I had gathered him in my arms that April day as we approached Barterville, through these ten ensuing years, he had been my faithful and ever-constant companion. His cherished memory even now quickens the impulse within me in recording this laconic chronicle. "Luxor" we called him, or "Lux" for short.

Again came his deep-voiced bay, louder, nearer now—resounding and reverberating in long-drawn measures and half-sobs off through the silence-wrapped forest and away over into the sentinel-like dunes. Automatically I arose from the ground and straightened to full height. But instantly I slunk back close to the shock, crouching low and listening. For from behind me in the woods issued the low intonations of conversing voices—voices conversing in the Pottawattamie tongue. But Pottawattamie was as fluent in my command well-nigh, as was my English; tutored as I had been by Moccasin.

They drew nearer, though not within coherent range; and I recognized the one conducting the ma-

jority of the conversation. It was striking and different from any other that I had ever known—rather soft for a man's, musical and tremulous, yet firm and decisive, fluctuant as the owner's mood might be. Just now it was a low, deep monotone. It belonged to no other than Bruce Long. Bruce Long here! And with whom!

I leaned far sidewise, eagerly straining to catch their words. But I failed to discern the trend of their discourse. And I slipped around the shock and tried to see whom Long's companion might be, even risking exposure of myself in the act. But they were deep within the gloom of the trees and I was thereupon unable to detect their persons among the shadows. And afterwards I was heartily thankful that they failed to notice me.

But as I watched, the talking ceased a moment. Then suddenly a light flared in the darkness, flashing full upon the faces of three men. Two of them I instantly knew to be French-Canadian half-breeds. The third was Bruce Long. He was lighting a cigarette with a small blazing stick. I wondered deeply, for it was the first match that I had ever seen.

It blazed an instant, then Long threw it aside, and in the air it went out. All was black again. Only

the red coal of the cigarette glowed and showed the course they were taking. And they were coming from the hills. My curiosity was highly aroused, and I rued my disadvantage in being unable to distinguish their words.

And I was still intent upon that cigarette coal when "Who-wha-a-who!" from off toward the lake broke in upon the mellow strains of Luxor's hunting-song. And I, forming a cup of my palms and placing them to my mouth, hallooed back in answer "Who-wha-a-who!" to Dick and Jean. For I knew full sure it was Dick McCollister and Jean Ferrier, my sole chums of the wilderness. They resided three miles cross-cut to the south-east of us, our nearest neighbors besides the Arnolds and old Moccasin in that slowly settling wild. And today it seems a long way to have gone for neighbors, but little did we actually think of it in those days. The boys and I had arranged for a coon-hunt this night, and I saw them by the feeble glimmer of the after-glow, emerge from the woods and climbing the old stake-and-rider fence, strike across-field in my direction.

"Got 'em set a-goin' a'reedy, eh?" shouted Jean as I went forward to meet them. "Perty fine music,

thet. Great ol' voice I tell you. Soun's better'n a dance-fiddle t' all cept the coon, I jedge."

"No 'coon there," I answered. "That bay means deer, or I miss my guess."

And straightway I was mindless of Bruce Long and the two strangers. And straightway, willingly I abandoned my shucking, and together we strolled across the meadow over home. Supper had long awaited me; but first I attended to my chores, then hurriedly ate. And while I ate old Luxor's deep strains drifted to us through the silent night and through our open door and set our nerves a-tingle.

"Me 'n' Jean here sot it down ez what we warn't goin' t' kill nary a deer this fall till snow flew," commented Dick in his woods-bred drawl. "But I reckon ez when a feller hears thet sort o' music he kinder fergits his determination. S'posin' ez how thet's mebbe a buck now, 'twouldn't do nary harm t' bring him down. Eh, Jean?"

"There's not one bit of use, boys," I broke in, observing their uneasiness, "of waiting for me. The deer is making right up the ravine between here and Arnold's. If he has not already passed, you can get the lead of him, and I will join you shortly."

"Wahl, we ain't jest likin' the idee o' rushin' off'm

you, but it's sartin and sure thet if he's a'ready past, we won't kill him; 'n' nohow 'twon't do nary harm t' try, I guess."

"Never mind about excusses," I replied off-hand. "Hurry and luck to you. I'll be there too, as soon as I've finished this grub."

"Jest shoot if y' can't find us," Jean called from the door. "An' don't be long eatin'."

In due season I finished my supper, and snatching my rifle—father's old flint-lock—and the powder-horn and shot-pouch from the wall, was on the point of leaving the house, when I noticed that mother was watching me with marked degree of apprehension. It had ever been thus. She feared the gun and the woods, especially by night. And as usual I went over to her, put an arm fondly about her and kissed her tenderly.

"Never mind, mother," I said, "never mind. I'll be back early, and maybe we'll have venison tomorrow."

"Dave," she answered, and her voice was tender, "Dave, I like not for you to hunt with those boys, especially by night. I am afraid," she faltered. "I've always been afraid and can't help it. It may be silly

to feel this way about it, but, son-o-mine, I can't help it."

"Why, mother, there is not the least danger. Really there is not. And you know that we have been out of meat for some time now, and we need some badly. Do not compel me to go feeling guilty because of going against your will. And so far as the boys are concerned, there never lived two better hearted fellows than Dick and Jean."

"But," and her words came hesitant, "Mr. Arnold—."

"I know full well that Tom doesn't like them nor ever has, for that matter. But many people Tom doesn't like. It all depends upon whether he takes a notion to a person or not, that's all. You know he will not even tolerate little Mary here just because she trampled down and plucked some of his buckwheat once because she wanted some posies. Tom's a crank in some ways. And just because he dislikes Dick and Jean because they accidentally shot that fool calf, misjudging it for a deer, speaks nothing in disfavor toward them."

"Yes, but don't you know that Bouncer was yesterday found dead with a bullet through him?"

"Found dead!" I gasped. "Where?"

Bouncer was Martha's dog and I loved him almost as my own,

"Found dead in the ravine woods. And Tom thinks these very boys are guilty of his death."

"Then Tom's wrong, Mother. Dick and Jean both thought a great deal of old Bouncer. Why, just think how much we have hunted together with him. And they have always been fond of him—just as fond of him as they are even of Luxor."

"You may be right, son, But do be careful, for my sake, be awfully careful about shooting."

"I always am. Do not be concerned about me. There is no danger, I assure you."

Mayhap I would have tarried to say more, but the sharp crack of a rifle cut me short, and I hastened from the house into the moon-lit night without.

Another rifle spoke, its booming report bounding down the silence in long and lasting reverberations, its muttering cadences slowly dying away into silence in the forest across the lake.

I hurried, almost ran, to the woods, and thence down into the ravine following the creek toward the quarter whence the shots.

CHAPTER III.

A SHOT FROM THE DARK.

THE night was breathless. Strained stillness had fallen upon the woods. Luxor's voice at the second report had suddenly hushed. And not a sound came there to direct me as I plodded along the creek's devious way, striking downstream. The sallow moon, still far to eastward, filtered her wan beams down through the leafy covering of the woods and her feeble rays fell in small blotches of light upon the ground about me.

And I wandered on, perforce more slowly now, hampered by this indistinct gloom about me, and wondering at this sudden quiet. Then after a time, far away, old Luxor's voice was raised in one long mournful howl. And instantly I knew something was wrong. And I sprang forward on the run, calling loudly, but received no answer. Momentarily I grew more apprehensive. Then as I hastened precipitately on, stumbling, staggering in the dark, and continuously calling, my old dog sprang from out

the gloom before me, and turning as quickly about, led me on, straight out of the ravine and up into the higher woods to a natural opening of the trees where the moonlight streamed down in unobstructed splendor.

And never shall I forget the sight of it all; how old Luxor, running forward into the center of the opening, paused beside something which lay at length upon the ground; and I can again see his ungainly hound's body, char-black and glossy in the moonlight and his long black tail drooped low—see him as he sank almost to earth, and his sleek, ear-stubbed head raised toward the stars as he poured forth his sorrow once again in his deep-voiced, woeful wail, as though he well comprehended the significance of that which he guarded as his licit own.

And I, for the moment, stood as one stricken suddenly with paralysis, powerless to stir from my tracks. And I could but vaguely discern that before me; but even so, my brain swam, my blood chilled and my hand involuntarily sought my eyes to shut out the vision. For, in the center of the space, his kindly face tuned upward to the bright moonlight, lay my friend, and all but father (for in troth such

had he been, fosterly, since the demise of mine own), Thomas Arnold, dead!

I groaned aloud, and reeled backward, nigh unto falling, dazed. But in reeling, a strong arm was thrust about me, my rifle was wrenched quickly from my grasp and I found as the shock of the surprise wore off, that my hands had been deftly bound behind me. I turned and faced Bruce Long.

He was shirt-sleeved and bare-headed. And he was grim-visaged and self-collected. And for the moment I could not find my tongue. I stood as one suddenly precipitated into dark void, unable to even grope for an explanation, and my faculties seemed stupid and I could not think.

Then slowly I became aware of one other thing—became aware of one other presence besides Bruce. And it was some little time ere I became, in a blurred sort of way, fully assured that it was no other than Moccasin. Then slowly as my mind cleared, I wondered that he should assist Long in this work.

But Bruce Long lost no time. He grasped me by the shoulder and led me to one side. And he indicated with a finger, where looking, I beheld

upon the ground close to the edge of the clearing, Dick and Jean, bound hand and foot.

"And you are in it too," he said with deliberation. "I thought as much."

For the moment I made him no answer. Then slowly a thought came to me. And as I spoke I turned toward him. At my words I saw him flinch; and I saw his face, pale as it was even then in the wan moonlight, blanch lurid.

"Dick and Jean, I presume you mean, sir. But where are your two accomplices, sir?"

But even as he paled he laughed lightly, carelessly.

"Surely, young Bundy, you are glib-tongued. And what you may mean is far from me to understand. You are shaken; you are shocked and your speech does not convey your thoughts. My two accomplices? Your two accomplices, you mean. They are here before you. Are you blind in the moonlight?"

And his manner was indicative of forced satire.

"Scarcely, sir," I answered.

He looked at me with narrowed lids.

"You are a fool!" he snapped sulkily. "Go lie with the others!"

And I, helpless as I was with my hands bound behind me, was pushed suddenly backward by him, and stumbling, fell to the earth. Ere I could recover myself, he had wrapped a thong about my ankles, and I, with the boys, lay powerless as they.

"Here, Moccasin, lend a hand," Long said as he straightened up. Moccasin, obeying, they gathered the body of Tom between them, and gravely they carried it homeward, Luxor following; while we three, lying there in the silvery moonlight, were logs in our bondage, and as such, scarce wondered at the strangeness of it all.

"Dave," at length whispered Jean.

"What," I answered.

"What d' yer s'pose it all means, anyhow?"

"It means," I replied pointedly, "it means that we three are murderers."

"Murderers?" he repeated, in a voice of mystification.

"Yes; that you and Dick and I have killed Tom Arnold."

"Killed Tom Arnold? Why, Dave, yer jokin'." We didn't hurt Tom. He shot hisself."

"That remains to be proved. Tell me about it."

In a poor sort of way I was but trying their metal.

"Yer don't mean it, Dave," broke in Dick. "Course yer only jokin'. Really yer don't mean that ye believe we killed Tom, d'yer?"

"Believing or no, looks as though you did it."

"Why, Dave, we war a talkin'. He war tellin' us ter git off'n his land."

"Thought so," I commented.

"'N' we 'as goin' t' git off when the buck come erlong. We both o' us fired."

"I did not," growled Jean, querulously.

"I hearn yer shoot jest arter me."

"Twa'n't me though," affirmed Jean.

"Then who the devil war it?"

"Can't say; twa'n't me though. 'Twar behind me."

"From behind you?" I exclaimed incredulously.

"Yea, from the dark," answered Jean.

"Was Long with Arnold?" I next asked.

"Didn't see nothin' o' him."

"And where was Moccasin?"

"Him neither. He must 'a' been with Long, I guess. Leastways they two ketched us."

"Caught you? Why, did you run?"

"Dick did—to the deer. I stayed thar with Tom.

I saw him ez he keeled over, an' I grabbed him ez he sprawled. Jest while I war aholt o' him yit, they two ketched me. Then they got Dick while he war a-cuttin' the buck's throat"

"But who fired the second shot, Jean?"

"Thet war the one from the dark. Came jest arter Dick's."

"Where's your gun, Jean?"

"Lyin' over thar, I reckon, jest whar I left it—over thar whar Arnold war a-layin'."

I commenced wrestling with my thongs. An idea had come to me. Could I but procure Jean's gun, I could verify his statements and satisfy my doubts concerning the affair, in this one phase at least. But even as I strove to free myself, I heard indistinctly a whispered "Dave" from the gloom, and I knew it was Martha's voice.

"Here I am, Martha," I answered.

And I heard the rustle of her dress as she came nearer. As she came to me I saw her catch her breath in surprise, and, as she bent above me, I saw her face was tearful; her checked sobbing was audible in the over-wrought stillness.

"Moccasin told me you were here, Dave. He

said as he did the other night, 'The track still lies in the forest,' but I don't know what he means."

Stooping over me she unsheathed my knife, and, as with an effort, I turned to my side, she cut my thongs, and then those about my ankles; I stood free, and for the next moment hesitated. But not so Martha. Instantly she was at the side of Dick and she cut his thongs as she had mine; then in turn Jean's, and they stood with me, rubbing their smarting and aching limbs where the bonds had cruelly bound.

Thus she spoke as she came over and resheathed my knife in my belt, saying: "Dave, you are at liberty now. If you would remain so, do not come to the house—do not meddle with Bruce Long. He is infuriated. Serious results will come of it. They will return here shortly for you, and you had better leave immediately." Then ere I could remonstrate or detain her, with a lowly mumble, "Remember Moccasin says: 'The track still lies in the forest,' and she was gone like a shadow dissolving into the nightly shades.

Still I stood, experiencing a state of semi-comprehension of the things that had transpired about me.

I brushed a hand across my eyes as though to clear my vision and my thoughts, exerting myself to rally to immediate action. I was brought to full consciousness by Jean.

While I went for mine, he strode over to his gun. It lay exactly where it had fallen from his grasp when he had sprung to Arnold's assistance. He secured it, brought it to me, and I, inspecting the priming, found the load still intact. I smelt of the muzzle. Obviously it had not been fired since last cleaning.

Whence then that second shot?

I spoke first.

"Notwithstanding Martha's advice, boys, it seems to me our place is to go straight up to the house and stand our ground. It is all bad enough as it is, but it may be worse. There are three of us—should affairs come to it—against two; and I'm pretty certain of Moccasin. What say you, Dick?"

"Not for mine," he grumbled. "I'm goin' home jest ez quick ez I can get thar."

"And you, Jean?"

"Ner me neither. I'm fer home, too."

"Come, then," I answered, and struck into the woods, intent homeward. The boys followed, me-

chanically, silently, close arear, shuffling heavily along, their dogged conduct expressive of their utter mystification of the whole affair, as in troth, was I also.

CHAPTER IV.

AN UNSPRUNG TRAP OF NATURE.

INTERSECTING our place from Arnold's, wound the creek! Its ravine still lay heavily timbered, not a stick of the primeval having been felled except where our private road-way cut its passage. On either slope of the ravine a cut in the hill had been necessary for the road with a small "fill" at the bottom; while on either side of the creek-bed for some twenty yards, "corduroy" had been resorted to on account of the unstable quality of the soil—a soft ooze popularly termed "quagmire." Spanning the stream a rude bridge of cedar logs the size of fence-posts, rendered precarious crossing.

'Twas here at this road that I bade the boys good-night, as they betook themselves on homeward, pursuing the ravine's devious route, thence around the lake and cross-cut on a ticklish trail the remainder of the way. Upon their departure I went down to the creek bridge and lingered there, gazing meditatively down into the sluggish flow, revolving over and over

in my mind the occurrences of the last hour. I brooded morbidly upon them. I could come to no decision upon any feature. What could be the basis for such complicated enigma? Whence that second shot? I stood and puzzled. Then I remembered Bruce Long's two strangers.

I seated myself upon the edge of the bridge. About me as I sat there and along the narrow vista of the roadway, the bright moonlight streamed down coldly, but within the surrounding forest it struggled uncertainly through the luxuriant foliage, rendering naught therein definite in detail. The gloom of the trees seemed haunted with dusky-shrouded apparitions stealthily wandering about—wavering shadow-ghosts of departed sylvan life. And now and anon I turned a half-questioning glance into its barrier, somehow expectant of something lurking within its concealment.

From shortly down-stream where the flow gurgled through an obstruction of brush-drift and leaves, the gentle droning of water softly rippled with pleasant volubility through the reigning quietude—the only continuous interruption upon the nightly silence. Frequently from over on the ravine slope the hushed sublimity of the moon-lit night would be broken by

the fall-drumming of a hen partridge. No nocturnal voice of the wild was lifted in the placid tranquility, and only the strident scrapping of a single katydid from a nearby branch announced the approach of winter.

Suddenly the bark of a fox was answered by the howl of a wolf. I became alert. I looked to the priming of my gun. Then as all subsided once more into silence, I divined it naught but a co-incidence of the wilderness; and thereupon resumed my train of meditation.

I was moodily inclined to-night and melancholy. And well so, since the harrowing incidents of the final hour. I was of no mind to go home and inform mother of the sad news. Every hour now was an hour of grace. For how should I ever manage a plausible explanation — how account for Tom's death? Tell her that the boys—the boys she had repeatedly warned me against—had deliberately become murderers? Oh, no. The very thought was repulsive. Or, was I able, with my poor gifts of colloquy to plead sufficiently their cause to turn her prejudiced convictions and by recounting my night groundless fears and suspicions, divert them into

other source? I regarded it impossible—and I deferred the compulsory hour.

A muskrat floated from under the bridge beneath me and on down current, causing scarce a ripple in its passage. And as I watched it swing from sight around a bend just below—again the bark of a fox was answered by the howl of a wolf—nearer now, one just over where the grouse had but ended her prolonged drum-roll; the other just to the left on the opposite hillside.

I stood up. Surely it was extraordinary for a fox to call a wolf.

Again sounded a repetition of the cries—now from each side of me; and I, glancing toward the block of opening at the road-cut in the hill, beheld the figure of a man outlined distinctly against the moon's brilliancy, standing at the brow of the slope. I turned about and looked behind me. A second man stood at the opposite opening.

I was trapped; on either side of me, as I have previously stated, on either bank of the creek, the ground was treacherous to the foot. And the stream itself at this point was wide and shallow, impossible for swimming, and flowed over a bed of soft muck, more treacherous than quicksand, and almost bottom-

less. Plots such as these abound in these regions and full well the resident realizes his jeopardy upon venturing into such a one.

Verily I was trapped.

The corduroy alone provided an escape—and to traverse it, I must needs walk some twenty yards toward one or the other of these men—these men, one in attitude and position the replica of the other and whom I readily deduced from their bulky physiques, to be no other than Long's strangers.

I considered all this in the lapse of a couple of seconds. Apprehensively and noiselessly I drew back the hammer of my gun, careful to avoid a betraying click of the lock, and at the same time, I examined the state of the priming.

I glanced up again toward the man at the eastward opening of the road. He was not there! I turned to the other. He also had vanished!

I was at a loss, more taken aback and surprised at this mysterious disappearance than I had been at their sudden appearance.

Then I descried something large and black in the road at the base of the cut.

Could I have dreamed, or had I experienced a chimera of my inherited idiosyncrasy?

Luxor alone was coming, trotting leisurely down the road toward me. Then with him beside me, I continued my way home. Mother had retired when I arrived. I was thankful. She would rest better this night, unapprised of the events of the evening.

CHAPTER V

THE BARRELLESS FLINT-LOCK MUSKET.

SATURDAY morn broke clear and calm after a wakeful night on my part. I was up ere dawn and through with my chores before the day had fairly begun. But I dreaded mother's call to breakfast, for I had determined upon telling her the sad news and upon trying my utmost to effect an acknowledgment of her belief in Dick's and Jean's innocence.

So when at last her summons came, I went without delay. But I could not force myself to eat; gently she chided me. Then I broke down utterly and the meal ended right there.

How I carried through a citation of it all, I remember not, but well I know that she would not bear me corroboration in my individual opinions of the case, and vehemently, though tearfully, declared the guilt of the boys. And I refrained from speaking of Long's mysterious strangers and the queer transactions in connection with them. Yet I made

it a point to acclaim strongly my certainty of Bruce Long being underneath the whole affair, but I could wring no vow from her of such belief, although I had told her that I had already resolved upon privately ferreting out the matter and promised to tell her all, even to the most minute circumstance within my knowledge.

At length our discourse closed, and together we went over to Arnold's. We found all depressed there and the shadow of the presence of death upon the household. For myself, I spoke not a word of solace to anyone, for I was in no mood to soothe.

I left mother there, and with my axe, took myself to work—my self-imposed work of splitting pine slabs for the rude coffin in which to lay to rest my paternal friend. I went out into the woods and felled the tree. Straightway I began my toilsome and tedious task. I labored the entire morning with heavy heart. And as I worked—'twas yet early—I saw Bruce Long saddle his horse and ride away on the road to Barterville. Well I divined what his mission might be.

During the slow trend of the morning, one by one the rough boards were hewn and laid aside for planing, so that when the dinner hour drew nigh, I

had neared the completion of my task. During the entire morning it was with a peculiar sense of uneasiness that I worked, because, strangely, at intervals I experienced the uncanny sensations of one being watched. And therefore I kept untiring vigilance, striving if possible to learn whom this unseen trailer of mine might be.

I was working at the edge of the woods, not far from last night's tragic scene. Perhaps these self-same whereabouts prompted my demure meditations, for I brooded heavily upon the unpromising state of affairs, until at times I became scarce alive to my present self and surroundings—until suddenly unwholesome chilling sensations would begin to creep along my cringing spine and settle at the base of my scalp. My hair would seem to rise and the roots to stiffen. Then I would rest my axe, straighten up, and glance apprehensively about me,

At the insistence of one of these monitions, as I glanced about me, my attention became attracted by a slight disturbance in the leaves close behind me; I wheeled instantly, just in time to catch a glimpse of a huge timber wolf slinking away among the trees. I rued my thoughtlessness in leaving my rifle at home.

I turned again to my work.

Thenceforward I worked undisturbed; and although I kept keen vigilance for the animal's reappearance, nothing occurred. At length, the sun having climbed to its meridian, the conch sounded, and I started homeward for dinner.

But scarce had I gone a hundred yards, when behind a scrub oak on the margin of the clearing, I descried the huge wolf crouched flat upon the ground. I stopped and looked at it. The head seemed shrunken, out of all proportion; its crouching posture was comically grotesque; its limbs were absurdly large, and worst of all, it had no eyes whatever—simply two cavities, that gave it a loathsome stare. But as I looked, from back within the depths of those eye-cavities, I caught the gleam of a true eye.

I was close upon it. And while I paused to observe it, I could not suppress a smile at such a grotesque ruse. As I stood there the thing moved, slouched forward a pace, arose on all fours, stretched, and suddenly reared onto its hinders, a creature so strangely horrible that I could not but recoil before it.

Even as I recoiled, evincing my abhorrence, I distinguished a guttural laugh from beneath the skin,

whereat the skin opened its length, fell back, and from its disguise stood forth—Moccasin!

His bronzed body was bare above the waist. His long white hair was braided tight, and one strand fell across his naked shoulder, whose muscular lineaments evinced no semblance of decrepitude. His moccasins of deer-skin came up well over his ankles, being bound tightly about the calves with thongs of raw-hide. In all, he was striking in appearance as he stood there disrobed before me, quietly laughing to himself at my discomfiture, and even in the surprise of the moment, I could but admire him.

Quickly his mirth vanished and a strange light came to his dark eye. He advanced toward me with the single word, "follow," upon his lips, and turning sidewise, led me back among the trees.

I kept close beside him and as he walked, he muttered beneath his breath that strange warning he had last given to Martha: "The track still lies in the forest." Besides that one sentence, he remained silent. It was some distance in the forest that he finally brought up at the hollow of a lightning-prostrated tree. He reached thereinto and grasping something, drew it forth—the self-same one I had

one night seen as a child—the barrelless flint-lock musket!

He handed it to me, and, examining it, I found it had been recently fired. The inside of the barrel was yet moist with the undried residuum from the powder.

“Where did you get this, Moccasin?” I inquired in Pottawattamie.

In reply he pointed with an arm off toward the quarter whence last night’s tragedy.

“A son of the great warrior, Chief Topinabe, does not sleep when the warpath is open. Rather, he prowles the woods with the skulking wolves, and they know him as one of themselves. But the time is not ripe for him to tell what he has seen. ‘The track still lies in the forest’.”

He turned quickly from me, and glided noiselessly away in that easy, swinging lope peculiar to his people.

Instantly I realized that I held in my hand that which, from the present outlook of affairs, might prove invaluable, should matters come to a crisis, which I thought they surely would. Here was evidence. Here was something worthy of consideration—a thing nevertheless wrapt in mystery and scarce

explainable, although I knew full well from whence it came, though what proof I might produce to that effect I could not foresee. Leastwise I would treasure the thing.

After Moccasin left me, I immediately struck homeward, and followed the wooded ravine to where the road from Barterville crossed the creek—the same place of my strange vision of Long's strangers last night in the moonlight.

Even as I walked along the corduroy, Bruce Long himself, mounted upon his spirited animal brought from the East, galloped down from the opposite slope of the road.

I carried the flint-lock. As he bore down upon me at goodly speed, I noticed him start, surprised, upon the recognition of it, and he drew up close before me and spoke imperiously:

"What the deuce are you doing with that weapon, young Bundy? Is it your property?"

"No," I answered tersely, "nor is it yours."

He looked at me contemptuously.

"Then I presume you found it in the woods."

"I was not its finder," I announced inanely.

"But I'll manage to be its keeper."

"I advise you to throw it away," he answered

condescendingly. "The thing possesses an evil charm. It will bring you no good. Take my advice and throw it away. Throw it in the creek."

"From whence you will at once fish it out," I retorted.

"I tell you, Bundy, the thing's damned," he continued disregarding my retort. "You had better take my advice. Never has it brought a man good since the day its barrel was filed off."

"But I dare say it served a woman," I returned pointedly.

"Of course, Bundy, you recognize the thing. I'll wot you remember it well, and all else that occurred upon your introduction to it. I'm full sure I do myself. But you scarce may know from whence the thing itself first came. Mayhap you've heard of the siege of Detroit, away back in the last century. Well, Bundy, that gun, that curst thing of evil charm there in your hand, belonged to no other than the mighty Pontiac himself. It failed him. And it is curst, damned by the Otter himself, and I advise you again to dispose of it without further delay. There are more reasons than one. And you'd better take my word. The thing's 'bad medicine'."

He rode forward, and disappeared over the brow of the road-cut hill.

CHAPTER VI

THE WARNING

I BETOOK myself home to dinner. But before eating I fed the team, and, at the same time, hid the musket beneath the hay. It was during the meal that mother mentioned the fact that Bruce Long had passed and shortly afterward repassed the house during the afternoon.

I told her I had met him in the ravine.

"And where did he seem to be going?" I inquired, without apparent interest.

"To the hills," she answered.

A thought was mine.

The road to Barterville had terminus at our very door. No further extension of the road, or in fact, any other road, penetrated to the hills. Solely might he reach them by riding through the woods. And whyfore, in the first place, should he go the hills? Here rooted my quandary. Furthermore, why not, if possible, find out his mission to the hills? Follow the hoof-prints of his horse and thereby, at

least, discover whither he had gone. This I determined to act upon, but I remained silent as to my intentions.

Immediately following dinner I repaired again to my labors of the morning. It proved but mid-afternoon when I, completing the task, went over home, took the team and hauled the rough boards home, in order to construct the rude coffin.

It was while I was hauling them, that, as I passed Arnold's, Bruce Long came out to me.

"I'm sorry, Bundy, that you've put yourself to all this needless inconvenience," and he indicated contemptuously the boards of my hewing. "The folks might have known that I would order a fitting casket built in town, and have told you as much instead of submitting to your generous offer of constructing such a crude thing as these would make. But I assure you, none the less, that we appreciate your kind and thoughtful endeavors in our behalf. The casket will arrive in due season for the funeral tomorrow afternoon. I presume you shall come to the funeral even though your two chums—your two accomplices—may not be allowed to come. They were arrested this morning.

I was scarce surprised, for I had anticipated the matter.

"And pray why not myself as well as they?" I demanded.

"You shall undoubtedly, sir, be included, in time," he admitted suavely.

"Mr. Long," I spoke conciliatory, "you are perfectly aware that you have the high hand in this case, and that as yet I have but an almost groundless suspicion, let alone any proof. But I dare advise you that you must needs stake your cards high and play them shrewdly, lest, the will itself by circumstantial evidence alone, together with what evidence I shall procure, shall thrust this crime upon your shoulders. A few days may see a change in the state of affairs from what they are now."

A smile flitted across his face and his eye kindled pleasantly.

"Dave," he said, amiably, "I see no cause for ill-feeling between us. We lived long as neighbors, years ago, and I have come again to be your neighbor. Moreover, you are to be Martha's husband, and we, in a sense, are related. By-the-bye, I would like to make you a proposition respecting this case, a proposition advantageous to us both. Could I

trust you to forever remain silent respecting what I shall say? Here, I have purposely brought the word of God with me for this very occasion. Do you now swear to heaven upon this book that you will consider this conference never to be revealed either in part or whole? Do you vow to consider it inviolate?"

"No, sir, I do not," I asservated. "I see no reason for such sublime action on your part. Furthermore, Mr. Long, I entertain no desire to deal with you in any way. I may as well drive on."

"Dave," he began afresh, as though reluctant to allow me to leave, "through your folly, then, my proposal comes to naught. You may have occasion to rue this headstrong action of yours," and he stepped closer and rested an arm upon the wagon box. Still he was his indomitable self, dauntless, expedient and intriguing.

"Dave," he continued, "do you remember when you were still a boy, that one dark, stormy night you were stolen from your bed and conducted you knew not whither? Do you remember an old woman that night—an old Indian woman—an old Indian medicine doctor—old Indian Onawago? Do you remember her incantation, in which the words she

taught me ran in part thus: 'Mighty, Marvelous, Mystic, Magic, Bloody, Wierd, Peculiar, Tragic!'"

"Well, Dave, you shall soon see the interpretation of these words unless you accede to my proposition. No, you still affirm? Very well, then, remember one thing—that her last word was 'Tragic.'"

Thereupon, Bruce turned brusquely and strode toward the Arnold house.

As I drove the remainder of my way home I wondered what measures Bruce Long would now take—and would it be possible for me to compete with him and frustrate aught that he might contrive to bring against the boys and myself?

What had been his game? Was it to delude me by his parry at goodwill with a thrust at friendship?—lure my private convictions from me and then pounce upon me by clutching the situation and contradicting my suppositions and knowledge of the case by some trickery capable of only his invention? As I unharnessed the team and stabled them, I was thankful I had revealed nothing to anyone.

Also, I determined to follow Bruce's trail to the hills without further delay.

CHAPTER VII.

THE "BIG MEDICINE" OF TOPINABE.

I WENT forthwith to the house, took down my old flint-lock and powder-horn from the wall, thrust a few bullets into my pocket, called Luxor, and together we started, first, to find, if possible, Moccasin.

Over by the lake I went to Moccasin's lodge, but did not find him. Thence down the heavily wooded ravine of the drainage creek I strolled, amid the dreamy semi-twilight that perpetually reigned there in dusky languor underneath the dense foliage of the hardwood forest. I could not help but loiter, careless and carefree, for it was the time of aught but the hush and calm of the woodland solitude, October's blessed calm, the only perfect calm of earth. My distracted spirits imbibed this calm, and for nigh an hour, we loitered, old Luxor thrashing sportively in advance, nosing and alert in expectancy of some forest denizen. But nothing gave him chase.

At length we came to the confluence of the

two streams from the twin lakes, where they join shortly above the beaver dam. It was sandy in the stream's bed at the junction, the sand having washed in during the spring freshets and collected there, forming a bar several yards in breadth.

'Twas here at the junction that I found a seat upon a wind-fallen log. Old Luxor crouched close by my side, his nose resting between his stretched paws, his large hazel-brown eyes ever open and watchful. His ear-stubs twitched upon any slight wood's disturbance, and his nostrils inhaled and exhaled the aroma of the forest.

Close before us the creek swept sluggishly along. Its flow so sluggish that scarce a babble it voiced except where it curled about some obstructions of brush-growth or log. From shortly down its course drifted the distance-drowned droning of water where it hurtled over the beaver dam. While faintly, the silvery, bell-like twinkle of a little spring as it trickled down from the hillside, softly sang in the stillness.

Heavily and with drowsy dullness, the muffled drumming of a grouse throbbed its pulsations which accelerated rapidly into a rolling whirr. Here and there, amid the autumnal tawny-yellow of the beech,

a jay's gay plumage would flash, while his shrill, strident jeer would answer some jabbering brother, both meanwhile engaged, like ruthless marauders, in dislodging the beech-nut. Now and then the lugubrious caw of a crow would jar with nerve grating dissonance upon the placid quietude; while the murmuring discourse of innumerable creepers varied with the occasional sweetness from the bubbling throat of a warbler, afforded constant music to me, the listener and lover of it all.

Suddenly old Luxor growled. I reached over and laid hold of him to keep him down. A moment more and I beheld the object of his mistrust. It was Moccasin.

He was wading amid-stream, working gradually toward us down the creek from the farther lake. His powerful stature stopped low; his eyes scrutinized the left bank of the stream. I commanded Luxor to be quiet and sat without apprising Moccasin of my whereabouts, curious to know the cause of his behavior. As usual, in the warmer months, he was stripped of all except the waist-cloth and moccasins; even these latter were lacking, perhaps because of his wading.

On a sudden he stooped and reaching down,

pressed his fingers into some indentation in the leaf mold of the creek-bank. I heard him mutter low to himself; then he saw me watching him.

"What is it, Moccasin?" I asked.

In answer he beckoned with silent gesture. I arose and went over to him. He pointed at the ground. Although I examined closely, I discerned nothing further than mere leaf-mold and a few scattered newly fallen leaves. I said as much to Moccasin, whereupon he motioned for me to follow him to the afore mentioned sand bar at the conjunction of the two currents. There I saw distinctly in the moist sand, prints that were strangely baffling—impressions the size of a large bear track—flat, disk-shaped, and of uniform dimensions. They trailed close upon one another, and it was plainly obvious that the creature of these marks had been neither biped nor quadruped. The forward prints had close beside them two identical others, making altogether four, while close rear were two other prints—whereupon the unknown creature of this sign without doubt walked upon six feet!

"The Son of my Brother sees before him 'the track that lies in the forest'," solemnly spoke the Indian.

Withal I was wholly at a loss to account for them. Hitherto I had been prone to consider lightly Moccasin's time and again repeated statement that this strange track was in the forest. I had even gone so far as to frame in my mind its origin. But now I knew my recent suppositions completely wrong. What creature of earth should travel with such a sign as this, very closely resembling wicker work? Besides, what animal of the northern woods was invested with six feet and travelled in a gallop, that is, half leaping, half running;—as was evidenced by the very short distance between these track-series.

I puzzled deeply, as I stood staring abstractedly down upon that strange trail. But Moccasin waited not for my quandary to end. Instead, he continued down-stream, working along the creek bank with his instinctive sixth sense, or so a sixth sense it seemed to me, for on my part I might distinguish nothing where he could practically follow without the slightest difficulty.

I endeavored to have Luxor follow the trail, but without success. The scent was cold. And after a little, Moccasin having gone a goodly distance, I left the sand bar and accompanied him down stream. We halted at the beaver dam while Moccasin at-

tended several snares he had set at the place. A beaver was in one of the traps—the trap being a primitive one—bait and noose affair, contrived so as to let the animal seek water and thereby drown. He took the beaver from the trap and at once began to skin it in order not to be obliged to carry the weighty carcass. While thus engaged, I questioned him rather sharply.

“How did it happen that you were with Bruce Long last night, Moccasin?” I asked in Pottawatamie.

He answered characteristically.

“How does it happen that the Son of my Brother today is on the path of the unknown when a Pottawatamie also is upon the path of the unknown?”

“That is not explaining to me how you happened to be with Bruce Long,” I returned.

“In the same way it happened that a Pottawatamie last night was on the path of a deer. So it happened that a paleface from the city was upon the same path. The three of them talked while they waited the coming of the deer. While they waited suddenly they heard voices—voices which they knew—voices which were distasteful to the one paleface who is now dead. He went from the Pottawatamie and the paleface from

the city, to where the voices sounded. The war song of my Brother's dog grew louder and louder. The Pottawatamie and the paleface from the city heard a gun speak—then followed the speaking of another gun. The Son of my Brother himself saw what followed."

"Then I take it for truth that you yourself was with Bruce Long when Tom was shot. Did Bruce have a gun with him?"

"If the paleface from the city had possessed a gun there would have been no prisoners taken."

"You mean that he would have killed Dick and Jean? I doubt not the same result. But 'tis a wonder to me he had not some weapon upon his person. I remember he usually carried a pistol when a boy."

"There was but one paleface rifle that spoke," continued the Indian. "The other half was pistol."

"I know," I added. "Did Bruce, so far as you could see, Moccasin, show any sign that he expected this thing to occur?"

"Does the rock show when it is to burst?—or the tree show when it is to fall?" he answered, with quiet reserve. Neither do they who dwell within the

great cities of the paleface show that which they think."

"But even so, Moccasin, do you not think that Long is at the bottom of this business?"

"The palefaces of the cities are serpents; their tongues are forked; they strike when not seen; they glide noiselessly to where they go; no eye traces their path, nor sees them hid among the leaves and grasses; no one may learn their ways; no one can tell where they may next coil, and their bite is death."

"You think, I dare say, even as I do. But what else do you know, Moccasin? Have you ferreted out anything further since last night? I'll warrant you did not play the wolf today for nothing."

Heretofore he had answered me while busied with his fur. But having now finished his task, he arose from his knees, the pelt in his left hand, my knife which he had borrowed for the occasion, in the other. And upon my questioning, he drew himself proudly to his full height, facing me, out-held the beaver skin on his left arm while with the knife still bloody with the skinning, aloft in his right, he addressed me solemnly, speaking loudly though slowly and with grave emphasis:

“The Son of my Brother needs a medicine. He needs it very much. He needs it that harm may not come to him. The beaver is the wisest of the Great Manitou’s many children. The beaver’s spirit is the biggest medicine of all. The Son of my Brother needs the spirit of the beaver. It shall be his. So sayeth Shakwaukskuk, the son of Topinabe. It shall be so.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE COMPACT WITH MOCCASIN.

AN hour later, Moccasin and I, together, stood beside the creek where it left the open timber and slunk away, as it were, into the dark seclusion of Indian Hollow, whose low-growing entanglement of vegetation constituted a veritable barrier to our further progress. The soft ground at our feet was trampled with hoof-prints, where a horse unmistakably had been tethered to a sycamore sapling that grew on the creek's bank. Also there were human footprints—prints of moccasined feet and prints from a sole and heel.

Bruce, 'twas self-evident, had left his horse here this morning, and proceeded on foot into the hollow, although, forsooth, I could not discover a path by which he could have entered. It was a certainty that one would be obliged to carve a passage through that tangle of vines and ivies that twisted themselves throughout the density of summack, buttonwood, alders and spice-brush, with occasionally a patch of

the well-nigh impassable elbow-brush blocking one's way.

"Well, Moccasin," I said, in no gentle tone, "I'm heartily sorry that you're a coward, for only a coward would refuse to follow these men's track into the undergrowth. Had I but the gift such as you have, of tracking where a white man cannot see any evidence whatever of a trail, I warrant you, I'd hesitate not an instant to follow these men wherever it is that they may go."

"The Son of my Brother brags," returned the Indian, softly, in his quiet reserve. "He is not wise with many moons. His hair is not white with many snows. He has not lived to see the power of his people swept before the blasts of paleface greed. He has not seen them plentiful as the deer of the woods—then seen them scattered to the land of the sunset. He has not listened to his fathers tell him how they drove the hateful Miamas from this land of the disputed hunting ground in order to live upon it themselves. He brags, but because he has not heard the voice of Manitou's thunder. The wise race of Pottawattamies have angered the Great Spirit. He no longer looks upon them with pleasure. He turns his face from their dances. He does not smile upon

their sacrifices. He saves them not from their enemies. Even the Miama dogs themselves find more favor in his power than do the brave warriors of the once warlike and numerous Pottawattamies. When a Miama speaks the Great Spirit hears his voice. When a Pottawattamie speaks his ears are closed. The son of my Brother brags; but he is not a Pottawattamie. He brags; but the medicines of the pale-face are not the medicines of the red man. He brags that he would go into the hollow. Let him go if he will. The spirits of the Miamas may not see him. But a Pottawattamie must follow the ways of his medicine. A Pottawattamie may not go into the hollow. Should he go, he would never return. The Son of my Brother is not of the forgotten race of Pottawattamies. He brags that he would go into the hollow. Then let him go!"

"'Tis certain that I am not versed in the mysteries and superstitions of your people, Moccasin. And what's more, I have mighty little use for them. Father believed in them more or less, but I do not. As for there being ghosts in the gulley between these hills, it's all folderol. But even so, we can fix this matter between us, that is, if you are willing to perform your share in the undertaking. Here is the

very spot for one of us to watch by day and the other by night. You have almost the sight of an owl, Moccasin, and 'twould perchance be best for you to watch by night. Or even to mount the top of the big hill above us, might prove of advantage. There is more than a little which we might learn thus, Moccasin. What say you of the plan?"

"Can the eye see the wind as it blows?" demanded the red-skin with grave profundity. "Can the wind hear the wings of a flying owl? Can the hand feel the passing of a shadow? Then neither can the Son of my Brother know when that which the eye cannot see, which the ear cannot hear and which the hand cannot feel, shall pass him by."

"Anyway, redskin," I ventured, slightly provoked, "I'm going to watch if need be by day and night. Luxor here will stay with me and I see no cause for fear so long as the priming is dry in this pan. Were you not so filled with the superstition of your tribe, I well believe we might make a discovery worth our while among the jungles of the gulch. 'Tis my opinion there's more in there than either of us gained the slightest inkling of. And it is certain, had I your gift of tracking, I'd explore without delay. But as it is, all I can do is to wait and

watch, which promises no easy task, nor pleasant. And I sure do wish that you would join me, Moccasin."

"The Son of my Brother is no coward. His heart is brave like the heart of a Pottawatamie, although he is not a red man. The medicines of the palefaces cannot save him from the medicines of the red man. Some of the red men's medicines are good; some are bad; some are very bad. But the medicines of Topinabe are good. And they are big. The Son of my Brother needs a medicine. He needs it very much. And it must be big. He needs the spirit of the beaver. And it shall be his."

Whereupon, even ere I realized his intention and could remonstrate or detain him, he abruptly turned from me, his lithe figure glided noiselessly away into the timber which we had traversed on our way hither. I stood and watched him depart, a sense of loneliness and isolation stealing upon me. What of importance so depressed the mind of the Indian?—what was it that caused him to address me consecutively with such concern?—why could he speak so earnestly and repeatedly of "medicines"—these were the thoughts which rankled in my disquieted imagination as I stood alone with Luxor at the mouth of

Indian Hollow and debated with myself what course to pursue.

Slung across his forearm, Moccasin carried the beaver's pelt. I knew not his intentions concerning its disposal in my behalf.

Then while I stood there revolving in my mind Moccasin's peculiar conduct, undecided whether to heed his admonitions or hazard my own project of waiting and watching, I determined upon neither course. Why not explore the Hollow myself?

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAUGH IN THE AIR.

I STOOD upon the mountain. An half hour had passed since my parting with Moccasin. An half hour during which I had found it futile to attempt penetrating the jungle-like growth of Indian Hollow. I had thereupon returned to my former decision of waiting and watching the development of affairs. But even as I had been engaged in constructing a rude sort of ambuscade in which to secret myself and Luxor, I had bethought me that a reconnoiter from the mountain top might perchance prove advantageous. Therefore, I climbed the mountain and gazed out over the panorama of the surrounding country.

Since my interview with Bruce Long, which had been near mid-afternoon, the remainder of the afternoon had sped swiftly by. It was now near sunset. Low in the west, the sinking sun hovered above the broad margin of the lake. The mighty watery expanse beneath it lay lifeless like a sea of heavy paint—lead colored—streaked with scintillating

threads of luminous silver. The whole might well have been some limitless mirror for aught of blemish or wrinkle upon its lifeless face. Yet it reposed ominous, darkly forbidding, boding evil to come. For annually during the term of Indian Summer, thus old Michigan lies, with not a breath of air to brush a ripple upon his glassy sheen. Though now this Saturday of late October, the halcyon tide was nearing its close, and the nebulous sky above, flooded with the yellow glare of the sinking sun, itself prognosticated gathering storm.

Over all an intense silence prevailed. Not the faintest whisper of air stirred. Only the plaintive cry of a solitary night-hawk, high in the burning ether, broke the almost deathlike stillness.

On my either side the lesser dunes rose bold and gray, far as the eye could reach, blackly reared against the fiery background like huge giants in repose, long, undulating, uniform. Between and around their huge bulks wound the valleys, traceable solely by their duskier gloom. While deepest, darkest of them all, down directly beneath me and to one side, girding half the mountain with its glossy solitude, lay Indian Hollow. And I wondered as I stood there gazing down into its darkling retirement,

as it lay several hundreds of feet beneath me, would the ghosts dare cry tonight !

Beneath me to landward stretched the darksome forest, lost in the distance with the continuation of itself. Two clearings alone cut their small areas amidst its ranks—our own homestead and Arnold's. Twin Lakes gleamed from out the somber verdure, and I could trace the tortuous depressions of the creek, winding its way to the base of this great mountain. I wondered what secrets it might divulge were it gifted with the power of speech.

Low above the forest and close above the eastern horizon stood the colorless ghost of the full moon. And even as I looked at her, it seemed she assumed a more sallow tinge. I was thankful to her. With her assistance alone, might I watch and wait the developments of affairs down there at the mouth of the hollow, ambushed. But first, I must get me home and perform my daily routine of chores before I might take up my lonely vigil. My reconnoiter from the mountain top had awarded me nothing. It was growing late and darkness was close at hand. I would go without further delay, and thereafter prepare for my sleepless night.

I spoke to Luxor to heel, turned to descend the

precipitous sand-slide of the landward slope, when I whirled about, startled, and gazed lakeward. From the beach, evidently, a laugh had arisen softly upon the listening silences. And even as I wheeled about, gliding out upon the narrow breadth of water, rendered visible by the Gap of Indian Hollow, where the Hollow opened on the lake,—across this narrow breadth of waters, glided a birch bark canoe. It held two men. Quick as it appeared, it as quickly flitted from sight, and only the few receding ripples of the paddles evidenced its having been other than illusion.

I was for the moment amazed, then exultant. Perchance even this might prove a source to the clue I sought.

Forthwith, I was mindless of Indian Hollow and its uncouth legends, mindless of Bruce Long's intrigue, mindless of my neglected chores, mindless of aught but to reach with all possible speed the lake shore and spy upon these men, whoever they might be. I doubted not they were Long's strangers. I tarried not an instant, and with Luxor near by, bolted down the lakeward slope of the mountain, following its gradual declivity to where it abruptly terminated in a low, frowning bluff of blue clay

fronting on the beach. It took but several minutes before I was ensconced behind a convenient bush growing upon the brow of this low bluff.

The long, white strand of shore fell away on either hand, tenantless. The Great Lake, sullen in its dark repose, stretched in its infinite vastness away before me, also tenantless. My quarry had escaped.

The sun had set these several minutes since and his strong radiance now leaped upward from behind the black line of the lake, tawning to a brilliant orange the entire western sky that in turn cast a feeble glimmer of uncertain light back upon the lake and hills. While shimmering in this reflected glow from the heavens, shortly out from shore, a serpentine wake twisted across the placid surface—the trail of the birch canoe. And to my surprise it lay turned upon its side directly before me some yards back from the water's edge.

No sooner did I espy it than I sprang down the face of the low bluff and over to it. Two paddles were underneath it, nothing more. Hereupon my quest of a clue had come to naught. Of course, there were moccasined footprints in the sand, but as for their worth, had not there been moccasined footprints where Bruce Long had tethered his horse?—

prints that led into the veritable jungle of the Hollow. Thus far, then I had gained nothing.

I turned about, faced the gap of Indian Hollow, and, dreading to enter its gloom-wrapped recesses in pursuance of my quest, I hesitated for the moment, my courage daunted. A vague uneasiness lay hold upon me; but mustering my will power and determination, I pushed resolutely forward to the brink of the creek where its waters sank into the sand. But here I paused again, not through lack of courage this time, but because, I half believed, I heard something. For a moment I listened, my every faculty acutely intense. Then my doubts were suddenly confirmed. A low rushing sound like the tremulo of fluttering wings was above me in the air; the silken rustle of migrating birds or water-fowl, methought. I glanced up, then around, but descried nothing. It continued several moments thus, constantly growing louder. Yet still I failed to descry from whence the sound came. Then suddenly louder and louder, like a wind rising on a stormy night, the sound bore down upon me, seeming to issue from the air, from the lake, from the earth and revolve about me in circles, in sweeps and in dashes,

swelling, then in turn, diminishing in undulating variation.

A cold, calmy sensation crept over me. A dread, hysterical oppression settled upon my heart. Perspiration broke out upon my hands and brows. My breathing seemed forcibly stifled. And throughout it all I strove against myself to summon my flagging courage and presence of mind. I braved myself in expectancy of momentary danger. But even while I braved myself, even while I strove to quell my rising apprehensions, Luxor ran forward casting himself prone upon the sand, threw back his sleek head and thrusting his nose upward, gave vent to a series of long drawn, lugubrious howls that sobbed away into the listening silences of Indian Hollow in wierd and plaintive cadences. During the moment I remembered an ancient superstition, that when under no provocation a dog howls, some one is soon to die.

Then mingling with his howling and in exact unison, an aerial laugh came and hovered about me, taunting and exultant with racuous derision. Slowly it broke from its low tone to a maniacal wail, and thence to a wild shout as if summoning someone from a distance.

A travail of fear shook within my breast. I trembled, my nerves were utterly beyond my control. My heart fluttered wildly in my throat, rebellious to my effort to revoke its panic.

Then suddenly I caught the dull thud of a foot-step close behind me. I turned to fall senseless from a heavy blow.

CHAPTER X.

LUXOR.

HIGH pitched ringing sounded in my ears. My brain swam; my mind was vacant; and I seemed to float through interminable darkness. I stirred from a cramped position and lay easier. Thence I lay for a long time striving vainly to recall my shattered memory—but my mind was as blank as a cloudless sky.

By degrees the ringing in my ears abated. Slowly, I began distinguishing a dim glimmer of light, a faint ruddy glow that penetrated and partly subdued the gloom about me. Again I moved, endeavoring to sit up, but my brain reeled and I fainted at the exertion. Piercing pains darted over me and my head throbbed to seeming bursting. Yet I was cold to chilling. Uninterrupted quiet brooded heavily about me, a boon in itself, and I gradually commenced to drowse away. I was in a sort of sub-conscious slumber when I aroused because of a snap like unto the exploding of a coal of fire.



I tottered over to the fire and sank to my knees.—Page 175.

With utmost endeavor and difficulty I shifted myself half-about, writhing and wrenching my bonds—for I found myself bound hand and foot—and turning myself on my side, I discovered some score of feet from where I lay, a small bed of coals glowing feebly from amidst gray ashes. They emitted sufficient light with which to ascertain the shadowy outlines of encircling shrubbery. The coals glowed in the center of a space—an area some twenty feet in diameter from which the brush growth had been cleared and the brush piled against the surrounding barrier of verdant shrubbery. I gazed about me, my mind gradually cleared of its bewilderment and after a time I was to an extent, mentally, myself again,

Gradually I comprehended my situation; comprehended my absolute helplessness—comprehended the dire fact that I had lost out completely all around, that I was nothing more than a miserable prisoner, in whose power, I might only guess. And as the melancholy truth dawned slowly upon me, I at first was angered, then frightened, then sick at heart. The blackness of the future loomed before me colossal-like. I writhed and wrenched at my bonds, enduring madly and well nigh in delirium my torturing conceptions. Yet at length I prevailed upon

myself to consider rationally, and upon consideration I was enthralled with amazement and an agonizing realization that upon me alone hung the balance of the entire complication of affairs. With this realization, I was seized with moody inertia.

The boys, without my aid, were to a surety doomed—doomed to a horror worse than the tomb (for they do not hang in Michigan) imprisonment for life. Mother and little sister Mary, with me gone—gone they knew not where—were destitute and alone, alone and destitute in an unsettled wilderness. And Martha—I studied for some time before I was able to see her dependence upon my actions.

Should Bruce succeed in convicting the boys, then the entire estate would assuredly come into his possession, disputed by none. I questioned myself if I thought him so lenient as to provide for Martha and her mother, unless—unless—I boiled at the very thought, unless he had come for more than—than the mere visit, as he declared.

In troth, the summed situation was demure enough for me and mine! I was clad in my habitual clothing; a buck-skin shirt, homespun trousers, buck-skin leggings and moccasins of Moccasin's handicraft. I lifted my head and with strained composure, glanced

down at my side. Yes my knife was gone, sheath and all. My trusty old rifle was nowhere within sight. My beaver-fur cap was not upon my head. Instead a cold, clammy mass pressed there. And I knew intuitively that it was clotted blood.

My heart sank with despondency. I feared for Luxor's life. For when I had received the blow that had rendered me senseless—lest I be mistaken in my dog—he had sprung upon my captor, whereat the cudgel which had all but snatched my life, surely would have proven more effective in his case. I hesitate not to confess that I broke down utterly, crediting my fears in true light. For when a man looses that friend enduring unto death, be it mongrel or pedigreed, beautiful or ungainly, the deep throbbing strings of nature's grand and tender harp are touched, sounding a chord that vibrates never but with this one incentive.

Melancholy, lassitude settled upon me, irrevocable because I tried to shake it off and brace up, but I was instilled with a dire and awful understanding of the future, black unto the darkest night. The interpretation of those strange night words was beginning to evolve before me. I recalled Bruce Long's parting words—his warning that I should soon enough

know their meaning, and that the last word was 'Tragic.' Also I recalled Moccasin's evasion of my direct questioning. "The palefaces of the cities are serpents and their bite is death."

He had intimated Bruce Long. "And their bite is death."

Ah, too true!

All was mystery. I prayed that it might chance be but the incubus of an overwrought imagination preying upon me.

Surely I had slept, for slowly I became aware of some one addressing me by name; and upon regaining consciousness, and looking up, I found Bruce Long, his shapely form drawn in black against the wan brilliancy of the moon's beams, beside me.

"Here's your old pup," he said.

Tied to a long deer-skin strip, and held by one hand, was Luxor, standing close at Long's side. Long unleashed him and the noble animal bounded to me in ecstasy, crouched upon me and demonstrated his gladness until I was compelled to command him to "charge" in order to hear Long's words.

He had strode over to the fire. With his cap he was fanning the embers, striving to enliven them into

igniting the few sticks he had tossed upon them, and at the same time talking rapidly as though he had no time to spare.

“A little more and things would have taken a decided turn from their mapped course. By sheer luck I stumbled upon them just in the nick of time. Francois was in the very act of putting a finish to your old dog. I arrested his hand even as he forced the trigger. The charge went wild. 'Twas a foolish deed of his to pull a gun this time of night among these hills where echoes are so loud and lasting. I fear old Moccasin is not asleep though I know not whether he suspects anything as to me, but full sure I know he can follow a trail with his eyes as easily as old Luxor with his nose. And but for his belief in these ghosts, he tells about, infesting the hollow,—Miamas, I believe—he would have unearthed us long since, but he dreads this place like he would to meet the devil himself, and I guess all others hereabouts are not far behind him in the same theories. This wood doesn't want to burn any too well. At last a blaze! Well, I've certainly earned it!”

“Now, Dave, we'll have it out and over with in short order.”

He laughed and turned from the fire to me. A

tiny blaze was catching among the faggots and beginning to crackle and snap, licking upward into the breathless night air, shedding its glare about the place and lighting up in black outline the admirable physique of Bruce Long as he stood before me.

As I lay there gazing up at him, I meditated upon how a man can so impregnate his conscience with repeated crushings until it is entirely subjugated; then with inimical intent, face composedly the one against whom he has premeditated evil without betraying the slightest emotion upon his external demeanor. But I was estimating Bruce Long wrong.

"I've considerable to tell you, Dave. It's cold and damp over there. Here, let me help you to the fire, where we can talk the matter over more comfortably and I hope, come to an agreement."

With his characteristic deliberation he came over to me, unpocketing his penknife, and, kneeling down beside me, cut my thongs and assisted me to my feet where I swayed with giddiness, my brain reeling unstably. Then Long spoke again.

"You're chilled. Step over to the fire. But beware any move you make. Beware at your peril. Understand! I'll not trust you farther than I must."

He fell back before me, pace by pace. His clean-

cut features glowered darkly severe. In his right hand he twirled carelessly a pistol. And he walked about the fire to the opposite side and seated himself crossed-legged upon the ground.

Scarce able to retain my equilibrium, I tottered over to the fire and sank to my knees before it, weak and exhausted, a sense of extreme faintness coming upon me. I stretched cold and benumbed hands to the welcome warmth and felt gradually the enlivening vitality mount throughout me. My blood began coursing wildly through my veins. My heart pulsed with unaccountable frenzy,—reaction probably after my recent legarthy. But meanwhile Long had discontinued his dialogue, though he continued toying with his pistol, significantly, so I thought.

I can see him once again as he sat there full within the fire-light, gazing into the glowing embers, their strong glare flashing upward into his handsome face, a smile playing about his mouth that suggested in its fixed downward curves, repressed bitterness. He had tossed aside his cap, and his wavy hair,—a deep rich chestnut, glossed in the flashing firelight with a lustre that I have never found in any but his. A solitary ringlet clung tenaciously over his left

temple and he crushed it back repeatedly only to have it persistently settle once more upon his brow. His apparel was black broadcloth. His shoes were patents. He wore a linen collar, open at the front, and a checkered black and white tie. From me of the backwoods such toggery begot reverence—a barrier of respect for their wearer that I seemed bound in honor to revere. Ye of the cities may not understand me, but ye of the rural districts have known this self same reverence.

Of a sudden Long glanced over at me and his gray eyes had lost their former geniality, now replaced by a cold, steely gleam that resided in their backmost depths.

“Well, young Bundy, what do you think of the situation?”

“I’m not wasting overmuch with terror,” I rejoined.

He smiled strangely.

“Pehaps not. But how like you the prospect of wasting away with hunger—even though you may overcome your terror? Well, to be bluntly frank, that’s your prospect—starvation! Now what do you think of the situation?”

"A man doesn't starve in an hour," I announced, sardonically.

"But he does in weeks. And you're on the high-road. Exercise, of course, to some extent, helps a man out, but its mighty little exercise a man gets bound hand and foot like you yourself have been, and henceforth shall be. I don't care to intimidate you, only I thought perchance you would like to know the situation. Starvation is a very promising future for a fellow, you know, so I thought I'd just enlighten you that you're well upon the highroad of starvation. Want to jog on, or back up—which?"

"I haven't struck anything but sand so far upon your metaphoric road, and, of course, I'm lodged in the rut of starvation, but—what of it?"

"Yes, a deep rut—a rut with a mountain of sand on one side, another great dune opposite, at the farther extremity Lake Michigan, and on the other, underbrush, which, unless you know the paths, you can't get through. Yes, sir, you're in a deep rut and a big one, the best rut for my purpose in this country, a rut which I doubt if white man other than myself has hitherto penetrated outside your present exploration. How do you enjoy exploring, anyhow? No cinch, is it? Oh, I forgot! You did explore this

same rut once when a kid. Remember the night? Pleasant reminiscence, isn't it? Can't you imagine your present outlook's rather such—'Mighty, Marvelous, Mystic,' etc.? But I won't hector you with the recitation of that little verse. I warrant you remember it all well enough. But its musical after all. I like the rhythm and the meter, but best of all, I like the theme! The theme is grand—to me—and significant, I dare say, to you. Or can it be possible that you've forgotten it?

'Mighty, Marvelous, Mystic, Magic,
Bloody, Weird, Peculiar, Tragic!'"

Then his voice sank lower, identically as on that other night:

"Mighty, Marvelous, Mystic, Magic,
Bloody! Weird! Peculiar! Tragic!"

Then sank to a sibilant whisper:

"Mighty, Marvelous, Mystic, Magic,
Bloody, Weird, Peculiar, Tragic!"

His blue-gray eyes shone with a strange light. A wiry smile drew about the corners of his mouth. He shifted the pistol to his other hand and leaned forward, gazing intently across the fire at me, and his whisper scarce bore upon the silence of the night.

"And, Dave, there's more in those eight words

than you dare dream. You're only beginning to fathom their depths. Fortunate you'd be if 'twere that you could help but fathom them. But it has been ordained otherwise—unless—unless you accede to my terms."

"I don't understand you," I interposed.

"Of course you don't. I didn't expect you would. But it's simply this: the three years stated in the will expires next month. Destiny, with a trifle of assistance on the quiet from me, has made me wealthy, at least soon to be. Now look here, Bundy; you're beastly poor; almost to poverty. I'll be rich inside of a month. Now, coming straight to the question, what do you ask to keep your mouth shut and tell nothing you may know?"

"I consider an offer to that effect as an insult, sir," I replied imperiously and with some heat.

He laughed outright and heartily.

"Gosh, but you've a wealth of blazon independence for a captive. Perchance you'll change your mind upon a little explanation from me."

He immediately grew serious—serious almost to severity.

"Now, look here, Bundy. This entire situation lies in my grasp. I intend moulding the issue to suit

my end. You alone are my stumbling block—the sole obstacle between me and fortune, and you—faugh! You're so easily disposed of that all I have to do is to do nothing. The sparrow cannot free itself from the talons of the hawk. Neither can you free yourself from my clutches. In other words, you are but the wounded sparrow, I the hawk. I hold you as I please and you are powerless, sinking slowly to your death—unless, unless you accept my proposal.”

“As it is, the Breeds swear they will not feed you—that if I will have you here, then through them you shall not be allowed a morsel of food to sustain your hated life. Gladly and with a grin would they wring your neck, and only through my intercessions will they not prove some treachery only of such as they. You shall lie bound both hand and foot and with thongs bound none too loosely. So for God's sake, Dave, think! Think, man, think! Imagine when you shall be lying here bound and helpless, starving by inches,—starving!—grating your teeth in agony and gnawing your fingers with famine! Horrible! Horrible!”

I sat shuddering.

Bruce Long's face had grown mysterious. His

eyes were lighted with a strange frenzy, and for once lost their bluish cast. He barely breathed his words as he leaned still farther forward, gazing intently with his cold gray eyes across the fire into my own. I sat as one frozen, wordless, listening as a sentenced man listens to the reading of his death warrant. I may have been livid with horror. An icy clutch seemed upon my heart, stifling its throbbing pulsations. And in my nervous and weakened state, with sheer rigor I overpowered the increasing terror which was rendering me momentarily more lacking in fortitude with which to combat Long's pressing determination in prosecution of his offered bribe.

"Come, Dave, don't play the fool. I seek arbitration. Do that which I beseech of you to do and live—live long and independently with that which I'll gladly give you instead of permitting them to take your life. Name your price; I'll meet it. Make it big, if you will, for I don't want your blood to be spilled through your own folly. That last word 'tragic' means that you must die—die by your own hand—die because Onawago has so spoken. Her last word every time was 'tragic' and 'tragic' it shall be unless you name your price; 'tragic' by means of yourself; Starvation—starvation because

you refuse my terms which are your sole means of salvation from your hideous doom. For Dave, you are in Onawago's custody, not mine. You are envined by her black magic. 'The Eye' is never off of you. Bundy, you are a doomed man! Her last word was 'Tragic.' And it must be so—unless you name your price. Do so, man! Don't play the fool!"

Then he sat and gazed across at me some minutes before he spoke again.

"I'm the fool to expect you to trust me, though," he said. "How the deuce I'm going to make good with you, I'd like to know. You know me well enough, perhaps only too well, but maybe not in quite the right light. I'm blamed for what others have done. Until now another has done the bidding,—I have obeyed. But the tables are going to turn. I'm going to give a few orders now! And I'll see that I'm obeyed, or, by God, something will have to break!

He arose, stepped over to the edge of our cleared space, and faced the mist-wrapped gloom, For a moment he hesitated. Then shrill and clear, he blew a prolonged whistle that pierced the night and sank away slowly in the deathly stillness. He waited

a minute or two, then repeated the same long drawn lingering note. A second or more elapsed. Then, wafted through the silent night, came in answer, a whistle identical to his own. Thereupon Bruce Long wheeled about and again came over to me.

He stood gazing down into the fire in silence. There was a contemplative expression on his face and his jaw had a determined set to it. A frown creased between his eye brows. His hands, thrust behind him, still toyed with the pistol. As he stood there, I wondered, almost feared, what this pensive mood of his might bode.

Luxor broke the unpleasant stress. He arose from where he lay strong within the heat and stalking over outstretched his long, lithe form along—beside me, his nose to the fire. Whereupon Bruce stepped around and kneeling beside Luxor, laid his pistol aside with careless abandon, methought, and lifting the shapely, tapering nose in the palm of his hand, gazed long and affectionately into Luxor's large, lustrous, brown eyes. In reponse, Luxor's tail swayed slowly from side to side. With sudden impulse I too reached over and rested a hand tenderly upon my old hound. Long gazed up at me, and there was meaning in his look which I could not

fathom. But well I knew he loved that dog to an extent even as I myself did, and, as he lay there outstretched between us, I felt, and, perchance, Long felt also, that in a sense he was a connecting link of our mutual sympathies.

Long was mumbling in a low monotone.

"Lux, good old dog, 'twas well for us all that I saved you when I did: yes, well for us all." Then he ceased speaking audibly and I distinguished the final sentence merely by the motion of his lips. That which he said was:

"Yes, well for all but Her."

I knew he feared to speak aloud lest he be overheard by others than myself.

"In the name of Heaven, Long," I cried with sudden impetuosity, "tell me what this all means."

He studied me with a bland smile.

"You'll know all soon enough, Bundy," he said.

CHAPTER XI.

EMPTY-HANDED RETRIBUTION.

LONG slowly rose to his feet and faced the gloom. A crackling in the brush had drawn his attention. A second later the shadowy form of a large man was discernible in the darkness, urging his way through the thicket. Then as he stepped forth from the skirting brush into our open space, he paused, and I recognized the larger of the two breeds.

He was of powerful brawn, an excellent type of physical manhood. He stood with a slouch to his shoulders; though he exhibited a dignified mien, a suggestion of dogged fearlessness, almost of contempt, I divined, as he regarded me first, then Long, with a sullen leer upon his truculent countenance—a truculence that I myself would have dreaded to goad further than occasion demanded.

“Francois,” Long addressed him with his usual domineering manner in both tone and bearing, “bring some meat here to him,” he indicated me with a lofty gesture. “And don’t be slow about it, either.”

The breed made not a sign toward obedience.

Long again commanded him, even more sternly than previously. Then casually, he reached over and picked the pistol from the sand. Simultaneously the breed placed a hand to his hip and his forefinger touched and caressed the hilt of his belt-hung, sheathed knife. A scowl gathered on his forehead and forced the drooping, shaggy brows low over his dark, gleaming eyes. But he turned, nevertheless, and, forcing his passage into the shrubbery, ere long was swallowed up in the gloom; and a minute or two later the disturbance occasioned by his passage into the shrubbery melted also into silence.

Long turned to me with an exultant smile.

"I doubt that he returns though," he said. "Could scarce blame him if he shouldn't. But I'll have them understand that I'm boss hereafter. I'm going to rule this roost to suit myself. I've knuckled to others plenty long enough. Things haven't gone my way either. I've had mighty little to say about affairs. But the tables are turned henceforth; things shall progress differently than in the past; my authority shall dominate. I'll stand no balks; I'm bound to see that you're fed—fed a day or two—until you too give in to me. But, by God, if you don't and

within short order, I've already told you the consequences. But old Luxor here must not starve—above all else he must not starve. And, Bundy, I warn you, beware that no harm befalls your dog!"

He began pacing back and forth before the fire, restlessly.

"You're in no condition to consider rationally tonight, Dave. But I cannot see how we can well wait to settle this matter. Delay will, I am afraid, unstring everything. Bull-headedness on your part will be your own downfall. You have but one alternative; to accept my proffered bribe, or else accept no bribe and simply take your oath to keep strictly dumb. Yet, I'd almost hate to trust you—you, or anybody else on a question of paramount importance such as this."

"Delay, I say, Dave, will wreck everything. Tonight, your mother thinks nothing of your absence. By tomorrow noon she will have commenced to worry and wonder at your prolonged stay. You appear not at the funeral in the afternoon. People look askance at one another. They shake their heads meaningly. Whyfore this absence, they inquire. Has he fled justice? Then if he fled to escape justice, the boys are assuredly guilty of crime

—and you were a third party involved, only more fortunate than they. Consequently they will bear the full extent of the law. And my work will be a mere nothing.”

“Tonight your mother calmly sleeps. Tomorrow night dire terror shall have filled her heart—a terrible fear and an awful knowing that her boy, her once beloved son, is a vile criminal. Tonight she sleeps. Tomorrow night at this time she will not sleep. Instead she will rave with madness.”

“And Martha, Dave, Martha,—Martha who loves you as she will never love another—Martha whom you love dearer than life itself—Martha will believe to her grave that you—you in whom she places utmost, implicit trust—she will believe to her grave that you murdered her father—and in cold blood.”

“And all this time, Dave, as a result of your headstrong foolhardiness, you shall be rotting in this place, dying or already dead. For, unless you accede to my terms I shall be handicapped in ever liberating you from her clutches. Her clutches which mean ultimate death.”

“But why scare you with this simple, plain truth, when the ghastly supernatural might perchance suffice, and with better result? But no—some future

period will serve, and mayhap better so—some future date.”

He whirled unexpectedly and stood over me, almost leering in his attitude, with a manner, methought, indicative of temporary dementia.

“Fie, such frivolity! One would think me still in kilts to hear me prate. Why, gash! While you sit there like a stoic, I prance about here and rave as though I were doomed and not you! Why, Bundy, here I stand cursing my luck, when, fellow, it’s the richest vein man ever panned! Luck! Ha, Luck! and yet, Bundy, and yet—”

“Dave Bundy! I swear to you the oath of a desperate man! By God! If it were in my power to change this awful truth I would hesitate not an instant. Gladly would I die to see at this moment the state of affairs as they existed thirty-six hours ago. ’Cause, Dave, ’fore God I’m innocent of his blood! Heaven knows I am! These hands are stainless as your own! Think ye, man that I slew him? Him who found me and nurtured me, cared for me even as he would have cared for his own—think ye that I sought his life? But of course you think so—of course you do—and why not? My God! My God!”

“How I wish I were away from it! How I would

to God I might undo what has been done! Would that I never had been led into it by Her! Gads! I hate her! Onawago, hearest thou? Onawago, would that I had never known thee or thy power! Hearest what I say, thou Onawago? Hearest what I say, thou hag! thou hag! thou witch! Hearest thou this which I say?"

He paused. His voice had been high pitched and full, ringing out fully within the small enclosure and bearing away into the gloomy solitude. For the moment succeeding his bold rebuke, an intense, unsevered silence endured, uncanny and unearthly in its over-wrought restraint. We stared into each other's eyes in fearful expectancy of something, we knew not what. I am positive by the strange and indescribable expression of Bruce Long's face and the wild, haunted look that shown within his steel gray eyes, that he regretted instantly his harsh derisive words.

Suddenly the fire snapped loud like a pistol shot, and simultaneously a wierd melody began therefrom, chanting softly and in a tremor, a low crooning song—a wierd Indian melody almost without tune, whose doleful, insensible crooning sounded upon the chill night air like the dull hum of droning

insects. Then slowly it gave way to a wild and hysterical laugh which came and hovered low above the fire; then retreated into the farther air where gradually it travelled and diminished in the distance, until finally it had all but subsided, when suddenly, back within the Hollow, an eldritch shriek pierced the silence, quivering and shivering in long drawn, languishing wails of distress. And magnifying the terrible effect a hundred fold, the silent hills flung back in fiendish mockery every accent, every quake of the horrid strain, every whimper of the maniacal wails. The spell was of prolonged duration, but suddenly it was supplanted by a loud, piercing cry, that burst from out the farthest depths of the Hollow, and penetrated and resounded for miles down through the broken quiet of the hills. But it stopped short, and the reverberating cadences throbbed away into the distance

At the cry, Bruce Long started with a frightened, hunted expression, turned from me, and stood gazing into the shadowy gloom of Indian Hollow, as though momentarily expecting the occurrence of something horrifying and of more consequence than the cry that had just subsided into silence; then with pale face and wiry smile, after a moment, he turned

and spoke to me low, very low, so low I could barely hear:

“Dave, that was the Cry! And I’ll tell you it’s no use, it’s no use! She’s incorrigible.”

And for the first and one time in my life I saw Bruce Long unnerved; but after it all he became his erstwhile same self again. For several minutes he stood staring abstractedly down into the fire before he suddenly braced up and with a laugh flung his irksome mood aside and regained his former equanimity. He walked over to the encircling brush-fence and breaking off several branches came back and cast them upon the smouldering embers.

“Dave,” he said blandly, “your head’s in awful shape. Your hair’s all matted with blood;” and he stepped over beside me and I could almost feel a shade of pity in his voice. “’Twasn’t any gentle love pat they gave you to knock a gash in your scalp like that. How they helped getting your skull I cannot see. But I don’t believe there’s any fracture or you’d be clean to the bad. Suppose you could stand a walk to the creek? It’s only a few steps. I could bathe your head then. It’s suicide for you to stay in this awful shape—suicide for yourself and murder for me. Come! Try! Get up!

Here, I'll help you! Gash, you're weak! The devil knows how you're alive, I don't. But I'm blamed sure I'm glad you are, 'cause I don't believe you're going to play the fool Dave, after you've had time to reflect upon the case at your leisure."

He reached down and grasping me by the arm, literally dragged me to my feet, and not relinquishing his grasp, all but hauled me along into the thicket. 'Twas all I could do to follow. It required every iota of the strength I could muster to tear and stumble through the tangled vegetation. Yet with the violent exercise I found my nerves quieting, my strength returning and my recently apathetic mentality reviving. My throat was dry with a burning thirst that increased constantly, and every slap of a twig in my face smarted grievously. Once I coughed, a dry hacking cough, and as I did so, Bruce turned upon me half angrily, yet in a whisper.

"Hush, Dave, hush! The very leaves have ears tonight. Make not a sound lest we both rue it. I doubt not that the breeds lurk hereabouts, though mayhap I may be mistaken in them! But I warn you, Dave, in the name of God, I warn you to forbear betraying our movements. Henceforth under no condition, under no provocation, make one

sound while we are absent from the fire. For if they suspect my befriending you then—well—the fight shall be all yours.”

As he breathed, rather than said this, he handed me a pocket flask. I drained its every drop, craving more. The crude, home-brewed peach brandy was all but nauseating, yet it was drink, and drink I was dying for. The beverage stimulated me a trifle, and the blandness of Long's smile tended to urge me on, for in it I detected a vague degree of commiseration as he gazed deep into my eyes. I felt to the fullness that on him, in truth, hung both my life and the fortunes of those I loved. As we plodded onward through the brush, I marveled and meditated upon the strangeness of it all.

We at length came to the creek, a bend that swept to the left, its over-hung vegetation obscuring the water from view until we had crawled beneath the bushes where I rested on my hands and knees, while Bruce immediately began sponging my head with his handkerchief. The coldness of the water on my face and head soothed and eased me almost to drowsiness, and I all but revelled in the pleasantness of Long's touch, as he streamed the icy trickles over

my enfevered nape and let them drip from my face and hair.

"Dave, this wound is bordering on seriousness. It's a bloody and a bad mess, at the least. I'm afraid of inflammation setting in. And, gash, man, if it should, your chances would be mighty thin and scarce. Fact is, boy, your chances are mighty slim, anyway. Yet there's no denying that I've placed myself on rather precarious grounds. I stand on no enviable soil at this moment. The price is more than the dirt. Wish I might even give it away. But I've bought; I've got to hang on. But the crop on such soil rarely thrives. Lord knows I wish I hadn't come west. And yet, Dave, there's no use despairing, after all. You'll not play the dunce; I'm positive you won't. Because, Dave, if you'll only help me harvest (you've already helped me plant) and work the thing on shares, man, everything will be O. K. Come, man, let's settle this thing right off. You need attention—need it bad; and you ought to to be home. What think you, Bundy? Come, man, don't balk any longer."

I made him no answer, and he waited a moment for one, whereupon he grew petulant.

"You're a fool to sulk, Bundy. God knows,

everything is my way—everything, boy, everything! You, everyone, everything! Don't sulk; there's no use. Why, Dave, do you believe you have the shadow of a chance? I, alone, hold this affair—hold you, the boys and the Arnolds. Why, as for you, you are out of the game entirely. The Arnolds are mine; you're mine; Dick and Jean are mine; the breeds are mine—even Onawago—and—and Martha; even Martha's mine. Dave, even Martha!" and he fairly shouted with exultation.

My heart grew frigid within me. My head swirled, blank void before my eyes. Oh, God! was I loser even in this?

"She's no equal east; gad, there's no equal to her anywhere! Her's is the beauty that takes. Wait till she's among the fair ones of the city; she'll beat them all. Rank outrage for her to 'waste her sweetness on the desert air,' he said, half quoting. 'Yea, flower born to blush unseen,' that is she. But she's to be mine, Dave, she's to be mine! Because, boy, I love her! And, damned if you shall stand in the way!"

I crouched lower. Dire desperation surged through me. 'Twas a bold stroke, yet in my inebriation of despair and helplessness I ventured.

Bruce leaned above me, slightly over me and

stooped low at the water's edge. With suddenness I wrenched myself sidewise, shoving my entire weight low down and against him. I heard him catch his breath in surprise as with violent impact I lunged against him. I felt him topple, grasping an overhanging branch with one hand and clutching at me with the other. It seems to me today that Providence lent me momentary vigor as I arose to my feet, though with poor stability, and broke into the copice with no mean gait for one in my condition. I heard Bruce splash heavily into the water behind me.

I proceeded slowly and with stealth, husbanding my strength as the need might be. In what direction I went I cared not, for what with the night mists, the density of the coverts, my brain reeling with exertion and ravaged with fever, my legs weak beneath me, and a cold sweat clammy upon me, it mattered not, so it seemed, whither I stumbled. Anywhere but here would suffice. Liberty lay in whatsoever direction I might escape; that liberty which held so much in store for many beside myself. But before I had gone to my satisfaction, which was no goodly distance as yet, I found my strength flagging, whereupon I made to secrete myself beneath some shelter

for the time. With a sense of utter exhaustion I ensconced myself beneath a bush, careless of my whereabouts, and cast myself prone upon the ground, leaning on my elbows, my face resting in my palms. As I crouched, gazing straight forward underneath the branches of dwarfed trees and bushes, suddenly I shrank close to the earth, an extreme faintness came over me, and with horror I shuddered at what I beheld.

CHAPTER XII.

THE VISION IN THE MOONLIGHT.

THE foliage of the shrubs and trees enclosing a small space some several yards away was tinged with the ruddy glow of firelight. In the center of this space, suspended from four interlapped poles, hung a smoke begrimed kettle, earthen pottery of primitive Indian make. Beneath it burned a small fire from which black pitch smoke ascended steadily and dissolved in the night air; while its ruddy light rendered a tawny semi-indistinct obscurity about the place. Gleaming and glittering from out this gloom, virulent and terrible, a large human eye was glaring straight and steadfastly down upon me, the pupil and iris jet black, the ball heavily bloodshot. The firelight playing upon the red veins gave an unwholesome expression and the gleam of the black pupil was as of life and artfully cunning. As I gazed, awe-stricken, spellbound, and fearful, my sight became slowly accustomed to the wierd half-light of the place and I commenced distinguishing other than the terri-

ble eye; for gradually assuming shape and proportion, a square built wigwam stood forth in the gloom. Of tanned deer skins was the covering, and designs, for the most part, hieroglyphic, were confusedly stained upon the leather. The one of greatest prominence it seemed was the uncouth eye, and of more than mere prominence for true to life and savagery, it gleamed and glared full upon me. I lay shuddering, fascinated.

Directly underneath the eye, the doorflap was thrown back and there within, filling the small doorway with her uncouth figure, sat, crouched, Onawago.

She both crouched and hunched over as she sat there gazing upward at the moon. A bright, scarlet blanket wrapped her shoulders and her coarse, oiled hair, black, straight and long, dragged loosely in scraggled strands upon it, glossing in the firelight. One naked arm reclined upon it, the skin-wrapped bones terrible with emaciation. Her face was upturned and its profile was outlined markedly against the sheer obscurity of the wigwam's interior. The ghostly moonlight, striking full, added pallor to her hideous visage. Her high cheek bones stood forth in bold relief, and the wrinkled skin that covered them was closely drawn and shiny. Her thin lips

were parted and behind them was visible the jagged snag of one discolored tooth. Her black, deep-socketed eyes reflected the light and glowed with a smouldering fierceness beneath the shaggy, over-drooping brows. She was crooning softly to herself as she sat there staring upward at the moon. Her uncouth body swayed back and forth in slow and regular time to the rhythm of her song. 'Twas a wierd Indian melody, and the melancholy brooding music impregnated my innermost heart with an awful and dire appallment. I gazed upon that abhorrent countenance upturned and ghastly pale in the moonlight, with the blood in my veins running cold and a calmy sweat upon me.

As I gazed upon her, terror stricken that I was, suddenly her eyes left their fixed stare upon the moon, left it, and dropped to the bushes shortly ahead into which they peered as though able to pierce their somber verdure. Then slowly, very slowly, as though measuring every inch of the way, her uncouth head began turning in my direction, a deathly smile upon her ghastly face. Then, as her eyes, with a demonish and vicious light, neared mine and met, a cold, icy thrill ran throughout me.

An icy hand seemed to grasp my heart and to stifle its throbbing beats; and I, shuddering uncontrollably, sank full upon the ground and with palms shielding my face, I buried it into the white, loose sand, shutting out the vision of those villainous eyes, set within that ghastly visage.

Then as I lay there inebriated with horror, I distinguished a movement and a stirring of leaves behind me and then Bruce's voice close to my ear in a whisper to me: "You've played the fool, Dave." Then,— "I must speak with her." And he left me lying there face downward and shuddering, regardless of what recourse toward escape I might take—left me and went toward Onawago.

I heard nothing thereafter. I sank into a heavy stupor, almost oblivion, dull apathy settling upon me. I was wholly unaware of their conference, until at length I distinguished the intonation of a strange, indescribable noise, hollow and racuous, grating the silence, until without warning it broke into that taunting laugh so often heard before; and the next moment Bruce Long seized me roughly by the shoulder and forcibly raised me to my feet. Whereupon I glanced at him flushed with anger and

his face set with determination. He wheeled about brusquely and strode rapidly away through the brush, bidding me follow. And in following I cast one glanced behind.

CHAPTER XIII

THE "MEDICINE" OF THE EYE.

SEEMINGLY, without the least difficulty, in this labyrinth of thicket, Long discovered a narrow winding path—a trail worn by the straight forward impress of the Indian toe. Pursuing its course, after the lapse of a few moments, we reached our lately abandoned fire.

It had been rekindled and was blazing brightly, lighting up the small brush-embraced area to the easy discernment of all within. Luxor lay outstretched before it, nor did he arise at our coming, simply tapped the earth lightly with his long tail and lay gazing at me with his lustrous brown eyes. Back from the fire, seated close to the brush edge, beholding us with ominous rancor and in silence, malignant and sullen, cross-legged sat the two breeds, Francois and the other.

Ignoring their presence, Long consulted his watch.

"Ah, 'tis late—past two. I'd best be going. As it is, I am compelled to steal from the house and have to use some little strategy in doing so for should Martha or her mother detect my absence I would find myself in rather an uncomfortable situation, coining credulous excuses therefor. And it's no child's play nor pleasant, this coming away over here among these dunes in the dead of night. When a kid I didn't mind it overmuch, but it's hard to inure myself to these nightly escapades without a twinge of apprehension and some dread in them as to what may, perchance, be their outcome. And to a certainly I wouldn't chase over to this hated place again by night, if it weren't for you, Dave. Blast such luck! There's sure going to be a shift around here. I found that out a few minutes ago. The prospect is black, Dave. Francois! and he whirled unexpectedly and faced the breeds. "Look here, you! Where is the meat?"

Undisguised rancor seamed the face of Francois. And he made as though to answer, but instead he deliberately reached behind him and bringing it forth tossed an ample hunk of vension over to Bruce Long, where it rolled in the dirt at his feet.

Long's face flushed angrily. He sprang forward a

pace. Instantly the pistol was in his hand and leveled.

"Long!" I fairly shrieked.

The gun lowered.

"Thanks, Bundy!"

He turned his back disdainfully upon the Breeds. Then reaching over he lifted the meat from the ground, a coating of sand heavy upon it.

"This is a rank outrage, Dave. Such foul stuff as this you shall not have. Lux will though,—here, old boy!" Luxor arose, stretched, gaped, and stalked stiffly over to Bruce and stood waiting, expectantly. Long began shaving the dirty meat with his pen knife, handing the scraps one by one to Luxor who devoured them ravenously and greedy for more. At length to a solid chunk Long whittled the meat, when, having freed it from the clinging sand and amply appeased Luxor's greed, he produced a slender tapering branch and spitting the venison, stirred the coals in order to roast the unappetizing viand. He held it from him at arm's length over the coals.

"Troth, Dave, this isn't promising! But, nevertheless, you have to eat it. There's sustenance in it.

Here, toast it yourself a minute or two," and he thrust the stick into my hand.

"Look here, you Indians," Long growled, "I'll have a bed built for this fellow. Go bring some grass from the shore, some hemlock boughs, some well dried leaves, or something suitable. And I want it done without any grumbling, and done in a hurry, or by— Get up there and move. I'm not saying this to hear my voice. Get up, I say! Hear me?"

Francois sat his ground, but the other arose and stood looking expectantly at Francois to do the same.

"That's right, Dominique. You've always been a good fellow. But you, Francois,—by the eternal, to which I'll send you unless you obey! Get up there, you skulking cur!"

Francois reluctantly arose. Long still stood threaetning and imperative.

"Now both of you go together and bring back here some of the sandgrass from the sand mounds. 'Twill make a good bed. Or you can cut hemlock if you had rather, or leaves, or anything soft and suitable for a bed for this sick fellow here. He's not going to be allowed to die until I've at least finished with him. And, understand, both of you, that you're

neither one of you, concerned in this affair. Understand me? This affair is mine and is no concern of yours. Now go and do as I said."

He, meantime, had reached into his trousers pocket from whence he brought forth two silver dollars. He pitched the Breeds each one. They silently turned and departed into the brush upon their mission, without a syllable of dissent.

Immediately Long huddled close to the fire, chilled to shivering with his drenched clothing.

"I came mighty near shooting one of those dogs," he mumbled.

"But your priming is wet," I observed.

"Not much, Bundy. Haven't you noticed that this gun is no ordinary pistol of the old type? It's a revolver—an entirely new thing—a very late invention. But of course you haven't as yet seen one before, away out here in the backwoods of Michigan. Back east, these are rapidly taking the place of the percussion locks, which are good enough I dare say. See, Dave, it doesn't load at the muzzle." He handed the gun over to me. "No clumsy, awkward shooting-iron like our old-style arms. These are handy, rapid, and, I actually believe, that in time they will become the gun mostly used, even perhaps

displace our trusty muzzle loaders, though that would seem almost an impossibility, wouldn't it? What a bunglesome contraption your own flintlock is alongside this neat weapon. See, it loads from behind. These things here are the loads; cartridges they are called, and are made out of brass tubing and filled with explosive. The primer is in the rear part, against which the hammer strikes and discharges. Just see how implicitly I trust you, Bundy, in permitting you to handle the one weapon between the two of us. But, gash, man, I'm not a whit scared of your rashness. But I'm thankful that you stopped me in my own headlong rashness but a moment since. Why, I'd have blown that filthy lout to Hades in half a second, if you hadn't yelled at me just when you did. And I'm glad you yelled, Bundy. I don't want to be any man's murderer. I've a temper that flashes like powder. Seems I'm actually crazed for the moment. I'm always sorry afterward. I've enough already, God knows, to be sorry over. And yet—and yet, Dave, I'm not wholly to blame, God's fact, I ain't. I know you believe that I am. How dare I presume to expect you to think otherwise? But, Dave, before God, I didn't do it—had nothing to do with it—hadn't an idea of such a thing happen-

ing. She learned of the hitches in the will. Tom's dead because she did. But I tell you, Bundy, no one mourns more than I. I feel that I am the whole root of the matter—'cause he found me, fostered me, raised me. Glad would I be had I not been found that night. Better by far that he had flung me into the waters of the little lake, beat my baby brains against a tree-trunk, left me to the wolves, starved me, anything, anything! Anything but cared for me! How I wish that I had never been born—born to this life of mystery. Why, Dave, boy, God alone knows who I am, what I am or where I came from—God alone, besides her. She knows maybe, maybe not; I often wonder. What wouldn't I give to know the truth—terrible as it may be. Born an outcast, I've lived like one. Reclusion seems bred in my very blood, yet I've always fought against it, and I can't gainsay that I haven't in a way battled successfully. Can you blame me, man, for what I've done? Put yourself in my shoes—knowing nothing of yourself, growing up wild and untrammelled even as some pasture weed, influenced never for good, despising everyone, despising earth and nature, despising even yourself, despising our Maker, despising everything. Fate spun a tangled web for me.

I've battled and striven against its meshes, and to what avail? And now, I'm discouraged, Dave, and disgusted. Oh, that 'twere in my power to right matters. But I can't, and that ends it. 'Tis done; 'tis over with; I'm powerless. Circumstances will simply have to follow their destined courses. I'd be a fool to sacrifice everything now in the eleventh hour solely for the sake of two country loons. Yet, really Dave, I'm sorry for and actually pity Dick and Jean. Poor hoodlums! They'll be sent over the road for a plentiful term. But what's the difference? What could they ever become away off here in these dreary wildernesses? What benefit could they ever be to the world, or even to themselves for all that. Such ignorant, unfortunate beings are naught but a burden unto themselves. Yet I suppose their dogged existences are sweet to them, after all. But I can't help it now; the die is cast; it shall end as best it may. I'm going to quit this brooding. Little more at this rate and I'd be insane with melancholia—faugh melancholia when everything is my way! Idiotic, isn't it, Dave?—Idiotic—yes and the whole thing is idiotic. This affair, my life even, everything of mine has always proven idiotic. Lord,

what's more idiotic than this here damned thing itself!"

Surprised, yet intensely fascinated, I watched Long savagely tear away his necktie, tear open his linen collar, and from about his neck untwine a small delicate gold chain. Something odd shaped dangled from it, the size of an acorn.

"I've worn this curst thing incessantly since old enough to toddle. The thing's charmed. It's a "medicine," Bundy—the biggest medicine ever known. Gad, the thing's loathsome and detestable! Can you imagine what it is, Bundy? I'll bet you can't. Here examine it closely. See, it's all shrunken and out of shape! Look carefully there now; hold it near the fire and well within the light. See the color in there—can't you see the color of a human eye there on that side? Can't you guess what it is? Why, Dave, it's a human eye!—Pontiac's! She has the other herself. Stole them from from his head and filled up the cavities. Stole them while chanting over his corpse down on the Illinois, there where he was stabbed. Surely you've heard the tale—how the Pottawatamies avenged his death at 'Starved Rock'—how they drove three hundred Illinois Indians, among whom he had been working,

when that dastardly, British-bred Shawanee stabbed him from behind while he harangued them in council; drove them up on the 'Rock of St. Louis' where La Salle had his stronghold for so many years under Tonty's command, and there starved them to death. That's why it's now called 'Starved Rock' instead of the 'Rock of St. Louis' as La Salle christened it when he built the fort there. Yes, sir, that's a human eye and was once in the magnificent head of Pontiac himself. Now, nigh a century afterwards, its purpose is mere 'medicine'—the big medicine, the biggest known;—sacred, charmed, inviolate. Why, Bundy, that thing's my guardian, my protector, my mainstay through both life and death. That's what an Indian's medicine means to him—his all in all. I'm white, but I've got my 'medicine' all the same. An odd trinket, isn't it, to carry around one's neck through life? The idiocy of the thing! Lord! I've been tempted to rid myself of the thing a hundred times. I detest the thing! But damme, I am forced to carry the foul thing through life!"

I watched him replace the chain and its strange charm about his neck and we sat for some moments close together before either of us spoke again.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNFOLDING OF THE NIGHT-MISTS.

I SAT idly fumbling the revolver, toasting the version with my left hand. And the first word was from me. "Don't you move!" I growled.

He started at the change in my voice, and glanced sidewise at me to gaze into the hollow barrel of the revolver in my right hand. I had dropped, meanwhile, the toasting stick.

But he was not disconcerted in the least.

"Dave, you're false. I'm sorry. You're not one to meet a man halfway. I expected Francois to play me foul, but hardly thought this of you. I trusted you to examine the weapon; and here you take advantage of me. But don't for one moment think that I am scared of you. You wouldn't pull the trigger for your life. You're all bluff, Dave; as harmless as a wind-blown leaf. Faugh! I'm well minded to snatch that gun right out of your hand."

And to my astonishment he actually did make a pass at it; but I jerked my hand, and as I jerked, my

forefinger wrapped about the trigger too lovingly and a belch of smoke and flame grazed the hand of Bruce Long. The roar of the charge rolled down the Hollow in undulating waves like the reverberating boom of thunder. For the succeeding moment the the white powder-smoke screened Bruce from me; and apprehensively I shrank back and slowly arose to my knees, then to my feet, stepping sidewise for a view of him. And well I did, for through the muffling smoke he suddenly launched forward, leaping at where, a second before, I had been.

"Stand where you are!" I cried threateningly, again cocking the revolver. "Don't you dare move!"

He stopped in his tracks.

"Sit down," I commanded.

He silently refused.

"Sit down, I say."

And he sank cross-legged.

"I won't make you hold up your hands," I said almost banteringly in the ecstasy of my triumph, "for I know you have no gun. But I'll have you sit where you are and not a word from you, nor a finger raised, because my finger's rebellious tonight."

"You're a bungler, Bundy," he retorted. "Nothing but a bungler to force that trigger when you

did. I considered you more worthy than such a deed. Scarcely supposed you'd fire on a man under no provocation. I trusted you and you've played me false. Yes, you've the high hand now, all right. But I've doubts as to you're holding it for long. A bungler never wins out except through sheer luck—the luck's not your way just at present."

His irony hurt me, I answered him not. This avenue of escape had voluntarily opened before me and I meant to follow it up. Still with the revolver leveled menacingly at him, unflinchingly I backed pace by pace from him to the brush edge, bidding Luxor follow.

One thing hindered and bothered. 'Twas foolhardiness attempting to escape with Long at liberty to act as soon as I should draw away into the brush. Yet there was nothing to bind him with. I thought a momet, hesitating. Ah, yes, grapevine had served me before as twine. But I had no knife. I dared not lower the gun a sufficient length of time to twist them in twain. I saw no recourse but to borrow Long's knife, by force if need be.

I deliberately walked over to him and addressed him perfunctorily.

"Hand over your knife, Mr. Long, please. I need it.

Reluctantly he reached into his trouser pocket and drew it forth, handing it to me.

"You intend, I suppose, cleaving a passage for yourself through that entanglement. Well, you've a tedious and a mighty strength-trying job before you then. But don't let the Breeds catch you slashing the brush. They'll resent it. It's their safeguard and they'll hate most awfully to have someone meddle with it. You're taking a big risk attempting to fight your way this foggy night out of this place. I'll warrant you don't succeed, but here's the knife anyway. It all depends on yourself henceforth."

I backed once more to the brush-edge, continuing to hold the revolver leveled. A few paces within it and I found without difficulty a twining woodbine ivy. With one hand I cut three strands of the vine. 'Twas but a moment's work; then I walked back to him, the while keeping him well covered with the gun. Stepping behind him, I made him give me his hands and without hesitancy. I was surprised at his punctual acquiescence. A moment more and I wrapped the woodbine about his wrists and drew it tight, careless of the pain inflicted by the thongs.

Then flinging an arm roughly about his neck, I threw him on his back, and, reaching over pinioned his legs with my weight and bound his ankles likewise. I knelt upon him and wrapped the two remaining vine-ropes about his ankles, gloating inwardly upon my triumph, though in silence. Long uttered not a word nor made an objection to my proceedings.

Suddenly Luxor crouched to the earth, glaring menacingly and growling, making as though in preparation for a spring. I glanced apprehensively behind me, but even as I glanced, something fell heavily upon me, embracing me, enveloping me in a smothering wrapping, and, muffled nigh to suffocation, I felt myself lifted and borne away, whither I did not know. Through my covering, as from a great distance and density, I heard a warning exclamation from Bruce Long, an oath, an answering taunt, then again a threatening curse from him, a loud, sharp bark from Luxor and the next moment a weighty body launched heavily upon me, which I knew was Luxor assailing my captor, whoever he might be. Then I felt Luxor give way from off me. Then all was silent. I felt myself carried some distance, then laid down gently.

At length I struggled with my great wrapping, but

to no avail. I was powerless, pinioned motionless. I felt for the revolver. It was gone. I remembered then of having lain it aside in order to have both hands with which to tie Bruce's ankles. I felt for his pen-knife. Ah, it was in my pocket. My blood surged with a great bound. Moving with utmost difficulty I unclasped its small blade. Puncturing the covering about me, I sawed a lengthy downward slit; then another and another through various thicknesses, and, at length, I beheld the moonlight. Parting the slits I crawled through the opening and recovered my feet. Dense brush on all sides hemmed me in. The night fog blurred the heavens, through which the moonlight pierced, feeble and wan. I stood alone. Luxor was nowhere near; neither was Bruce. I wondered, mystified, at the sudden and inexplicable transformation of my position.

But one thing I did see, for there in the gloom, standing forth through the mists, I discerned the barren slope of a sand hill. I lost not a moment in striking for and reaching it, I began laboriously trudging up its steep side, the sand slipping and giving way beneath my feet and flowing to the base. As I clambered and strove slowly upward, the sand ankle deep and tenacious, inwardly furious at my tedious

progress, weakening through the strain of endeavor, yet with all, thanking Providence for my strange and baffling deliverance through whose agency I knew not, I suddenly stopped short in my breathless climb, and clung for support to a sassafras, my heart sinking like lead in my breast, my brain reeling, an unnerving nausea throughout me—for I had reached a goodly elevation. I had looked down and to one side; and, as I looked, a trifling night-breath had caught and swirled the mists upward in an eddying current. Through this breach of a second's duration—through the night air and the unobstructed moonlight, down there to the left beneath me, in a small clearing in the thicket in the hollow, glowed the embers of a fire. And there beside the fire, strong within the glow, lay outstretched the long, lithe form of Luxor, motionless—perhaps lifeless. And there to my sorrow—to the chilling of my blood—to the reeling of my senses—to the infusing of weakness throughout my already weakened physique—there stood Long, his hands still bound, though his feet were free. His head hung despondently—despair incarnate, though he watched without a flinch and with a cold scornful expression, the antics and enactments of Francois and Dominique. To my horror I

saw they were building a fire. A stake already had been implanted beside it. Then the mists blew back and I saw no more.

I doubted not that they had failed to reckon upon Bruce's penknife being in my possession.

For the moment that I stood there on the hill-slope well nigh stunned, I refused to credit my eyesight. Could not this dread vision, glimpsed through the unfolding of the night mists have been, after all, naught but mere illusion—some phantom of my fevered imagination? I waited hopefully for one other stirring night breath to waft aside the vapor, that I might verify my own sanity. Yet, though I waited, sacrificing invaluable time, there came no parting of the fogs. Then I slunk silently back down the hill.

For what could be viler murder on my part than to leave him to a fate such as this.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SHADE OF PONTIAC.

AS a feline stalks its quarry, I slipped along in the direction of the fire, crawling for the most part on all fours in order to avoid the betraying rustle of the frost-crisp foliage that I should brush against in my passage. An age it seemed, when finally, I heard distinctly a voice that served to direct me to my goal. 'Twas the imperious voice of Bruce Long.

"Dogs! You'll suffer. What think you I may care for a few minutes torture? While you roast me and linger here in your infernal folly, through your short-sightedness, he'll escape. Mark my words! He'll escape. The ants aren't out till daybreak; and even then it will take hours for them to eat through the bear hides before they can get at him."

"By gar! De ants dey needs meats for dees wint-air. Now dey feas' dees day, now soon. Great beeg feas', they haf! Dominique and Francois dey

haf beeg feas' too, sometam, now soon, queek, Ha! Ha! Now soon, queek!"

It was Francois chuckling to himself, with facetious anticipation that made ominous reply to Bruce Long's admonitions.

"But I tell you he'll get away! Damme if I don't hope he does!"

Meanwhile I had glided noiselessly forward, and now was witness of the blood-curdling scene before me. From where I lay crouched behind the skirt-ing bush and well within its shadow, as I looked forward upon that dread scene, I was drunk with the appalling horror that should soon be enacted before my eyes—enacted unless I interfered. Interfere! And to what purpose? I, in my enfeebled state, physically, against two such brawn as they!

Bruce Long was tied to a stake, tied by his hands which were still behind him. His feet were bound to its base. A heap of firewood lay in waiting close by. Our original fire still smouldered shortly to one side. Luxor still lay outstretched and motionless within its warmth, though with gladness well nigh un-suppressible I discerned he breathed—breathed in short jerking gasps.

"Fools! Pile on your brush! You haven't

enough in your whole accursed gully to scorch my finger-tips! Pile it on! Heap it up! For while you're heaping it up—he'll escape! You're both dead dogs. He'll have the whole country population for twenty miles around here upon you. But pile it on, fools! Heap it up! There's a stick over there you've missed!"

Meanwhile he strained heavily upon his hand bonds, though futilely. Now he straightened up; then lurched suddenly forward from them, wrenching the stake within its socket. Yet his fetters gave not. Then with face pale and determined, though hopeless, he re-straightened to his full height and stood calmly regarding the breeds with a cynical sneer upon his face—regarded them while they gathered the brush-branch firewood, their dark faces alight with fiendish blood-thirst.

Luxor moved and I saw his eyes open. Dominique saw also. Quickly he snatched from the ground a long raw-hide thong and a moment more he had secured it about Luxor's neck, whereupon he yanked the old dog to his feet and dragged him over, tied him close behind Bruce Long's legs, where Luxor sank faint, with a low groan, to the earth. Ah, then both were to burn together!—burn

together, unless I interfered! And yet—and yet—I was not certain that in the extremity I should not dare the risk!

I carefully scanned the ground within the firelight. Then at length I discerned the object of my search. The revolver lay half imbedded in the sand near where Bruce had lain during my taking him prisoner. Yes, there it lay half hidden, but could I get it—possibly procure it without rash jeopardy? Verily no! It was too full within the radius of the firelight and too near the Breeds' present position. I lay and silently considered.

Then stealthily I edged around the brush until directly opposite the revolver. And there I lay in readiness.

My attention reverted again to Bruce. He still stood at full height, sardonically intent upon the Breeds. Then suddenly while both of them were bent in gathering an armful of fuel, I saw Bruce snatch a deep breath. Instantly from his opened lips burst forth the terrible squall of a panther. Francois with an agile bound was at his throat. I heard Long's guttural strangulations as the violent Breed throttled him. My nails dug deep into my palms in the suppression of my fury. For the moment I was

strongly tempted to rush from my hiding place and vent my worst upon the two fiends through means of the revolver's god-sent aid. But perforce I withheld my passion, and in an agony of awful suspense, awaited the development of this warning, voiced but now by Bruce.

To my horror and apprehension I saw the maddened Breed tear open Long's collar, and reaching therein wrench forth with violence the Medicine Eye. Fearful, awestruck, and horrified I watched him fling the thing, chain and all, into the fire. Spellbound, I watched it there among the coals, glistening and glittering strangely, glaring wildly as though with cunning calculation—glare until my sight could scarce withstand the strange penetrating glitter. Then it vanished. A small ring of ashes was left where it had lain. Ah, God! How quickly it had vanished! And, ah, God! That which I beheld even as it vanished! For while it lay there glittering virulently, it seemed to me that the smoke of the fire had taken form—taken the shadowy form of a human figure—the form of a magnificent and powerful warrior, draped in all the splendid regalia of his wargear, had taken form of the smoke and stooping had plucked the trinket from the coals.

Then both had vanished. The shade of Pontiac had reclaimed his own! Yet none came. The surrounding stillness, the chill night air and the gloomy moonlight, the mists, the vapor-enshrouded recesses of the Hollow and that horrid scene before me, luminated by our own late fire flashing wierdly, reposed and endured throughout it all. I lay cowering, awe-stricken by that which I beheld. Suddenly a whistle broke the tensity—a shrill, quavering whistle followed closely by two identical others, each long drawn out and shaping responsive echoes from the surrounding hills.

Melancholy dread crept upon me. I saw 'Lux' shift his stub ears and the Breeds for a moment were silent, probably also terrified by that which I had seen—I saw them glance sharply at one another and with every sense alert listen attentively, exhibiting the selfsame keenness as the hound when he strikes the fresh scent of the quarry. Preconcerted understanding existed between them for neither spoke nor uttered a single exclamation. The whistle's last dying echoes had subsided and the old irksome silence had again closed in, when suddenly it was repeated, this time in three shorter blasts, louder than previously but with selfsame quiver.

Simultaneously each Breed turned, and, before I could comprehend our great fortune, had glided stealthily away into the thicket.

I crouched for some time in a sort of daze before I guessed fully the situation. Then cautiously I crept forth from my hiding, and with surging thanksgiving that set my nerves tingling, I felt the cold steel of the revolver firmly within my hand before I ventured a word to Bruce.

He stood lurched forward with down-drooped head, utter dejection written upon his handsome face. He saw me not close beside him before I spoke and then he started. As the shock of his surprise wore off, he regarded me complacently and with a smile.

"Gad! Can I believe my senses, Dave? Why, how the deuce came you here? You're supposed to be forage for ants to winter on. Nice fate for a man—to be eaten alive, devoured piece-meal, atom by atom, until death delivers you from the hideous agony. But come, explain how you're here and unscratched? They are after you now."

I told him briefly. But during the while I lost no time. With his own pen-knife I severed his

bonds and stood him free. Then Luxor likewise—though 'Lux' was almost too weak to move.

"Now come, Long," I said, "we're going out of here without a second's delay. We'll carry Luxor into the brush here apace where the Breeds shall not aptly discover him and there leave him to care for himself till his strength returns and he can get home of his own accord. Come now, they may be back in a minute."

"Not much, Bundy. It's not meet that you should leave this Hollow. 'Twould be impossible for you to get out of here now, as well as old Luxor himself. You're both doomed together. Your fates are the same. Of course I know full sure they dare not burn him—though they would me. 'Tis decreed you shall both die together. And, Bundy, even though I might assist you in escaping, 'twould prove useless, because I should be thwarted in my purpose. She wills, and you, Luxor and I, all of us, obey. We are powerless to do otherwise."

"Long, listen to me. Those Breeds shall both die, and you too, if need be, but I shall escape from here. More than for my own good do I declare and shall ultimately enforce this threat. Martha, her mother, my own mother and little Mary, and above

all Dick and Jean, besides myself, hang helpless upon this one purpose of escaping, in which I shall succeed or myself die in the attempt. Now, I mean every syllable I say, so don't balk or act glum, but follow me, for I am going this very moment."

I ceased speaking because of a crackle in the nearby brush. Quickly I stepped with my back to the fire, my revolver cocked, desperation for the moment calming my overwrought nerves.

"Now you obey me, Long, or by heaven, I'll pull this on you before I do on the Breeds. There's four loads left—plenty. Stand aside there."

Bruce nonchalantly stepped aside, though I kept my eye well on him. No sooner had he done so than I distinguished the dim outlines of the Breeds within the cover of the brush. They paused there, I deem, with surprise at my occupancy of their late scene of barbarism, and myself in charge through the medium of death-dealing lead.

Now I saw them step quickly together and converse a moment designedly. Meanwhile I maintained my attitude of defiance of both them and Bruce. But as I held the heavy pistol at arms length and at full cock, in "ready," suddenly, with sharp impact, something struck it from my hand, tingling

my finger with benumbing pain—and glancing down at my feet, I beheld a good sized pebble where it had just fallen. Then before I could act, Bruce had sprung nimbly forward in low bent posture, darted past me like a wraith, and gathered the gun from the ground as he passed. As he stopped short close to me he was laughing softly to himself.

“Now, you infernal hell-hounds, come out of that brush. Hear ye? Step up here or I’ll send a quick and dutiful errand-runner after you that’ll not pause for parleying. Walk right up here. This is no time for conflabbing. You’re beaten at your own game; so march right up and be gentlemen—hounds though you are!”

To my astonishment the Breeds came slowly forward, their sensual faces wreathed in smiles. I suspected that some low-lived deviltry still lurked beneath such placid conduct. But as they advanced into our area Bruce frustrated any such intentions as they may have had, for he walked deliberately up to them and with brazen defiance thrust the gaping muzzle of that large horse pistol first into Francois’ face and then into Dominique’s. His bantering served to cow them.

“Now you stand there and without a move! This

is no infant's toying hereafter. Either of you move a finger and I'll blow you—now no use objecting. I'm going to care for you both and in grand style. It grieves me to see you running thus at large and especially at night. Now Dave, just step around here and bedeck them with ribbons. But pray, be gentle!"

He beckoned me indifferently to a small coil of raw-hide strips which I deemed had been the property of the Breeds. And, sparing no time in useless deliberation, I procured them and made haste to perform his will—to secure the two Breeds both hand and foot even as they had secured me. I performed it readily and with an intoxicating delight of retaliation. Some several minutes later they lay entirely at our mercy, bound both hand and foot and gagged in order that they should not summon untimely succor. Then in an exuberance of triumph, Bruce turned to me.

"Now, Bundy, it's your turn. I'm bound in duty to do this same to yourself. You, too, 'd prove a menace if at large. Even Luxor has to be held in restraint. He too might want to know too much. So don't bother about resisting because I'll hate like sixty to put you in worse shape than you

are already—though I'll promise I'll not hesitate too long before giving it to you. You've done me a most kindly service tonight, Dave, in delivering me from the vengeance of these two curs. Gads, 'twould be a relief to pull a trigger on each one separately! 'Twould relieve me of a lot of worry in our behalf for the balance of the day before I come again tonight, for you see it's nigh dawn now. It's already graying in the east. The moon's paling. So I'll have to be going. Now, don't kick up any unnecessary rumpus but accept these little strings like a man. This gun almost refused to behave itself seemly."

With his unperturbed candor he already was wrapping those hateful thongs of rawhide about my wrists—then about my ankles—and I lay helpless though thankfully alive—prostrate upon the bare ground. Then Bruce made Luxor fast to me and immediately turned to leave. Then a new thought seemed to be his, for he came back beside me and kneeling, began earnestly in a sunken whisper:

"There's a secret concern'g you and your life—the one and the only thing upon which the scales are now balancing—and that one thing is Luxor, yes old Luxor here. Yet perhaps—perhaps—no, not till

later shall I tell you this. Yes, some other time will serve better and the subject will keep. I shall return shortly before midnight. But while I am gone I forewarn you—warn you that as you value your life—warn you to beware that no harm befalls. Good night and fare you well! But remember, Dave, that I forewarn you that as you value your life, beware no harm befalls this dog!”

He arose to his feet. Then with a backward glance and a smile, a genial wave of the hand, he was gone—the cloud of mystery in which we moved rising ever blacker before me. For the moment succeeding Long’s departure, I lay in a state almost of stupefaction, endeavoring to unravel, at least, one thread of the mystery entangled about old Luxor and myself. In almost a state of stupefaction I say, for my mind, blurred by all the glamor of the late events, could grasp not the strangeness of it all. As I lay there before the dying fire upon one side, gazing into it ponderingly, it all seemed unreal and impossible, and with difficulty could I impress upon myself that it all was not, in fact, some weird and fantastic hallucination, and that, finally, I should not awake to discover it verily such.

Then as I lay there my lethargy incensed me and with mind close to dormancy and with my faithful Luxor huddled close beside me, I drowsed slowly into dreamless oblivion.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil."

MY mother's voice seemed speaking in my sleep, this old familiar passage. I stirred and awoke, opening my eyes to broad daylight. Once again it rang within my ears as from some unseen messenger. Troth, it was soothing sweet! I breathed it aloud, lingeringly, fondly, caressingly—imbibing hushed contentment from its divine solace.

My rest had been dreamless and profound. Freed from fatigue was I when I awoke, having slept to late afternoon, much to my surprise. I felt somewhat my usual self, though a haze hung before my eyes and a dull ache lay above them. My brain seemed full and giddy; and I was cold, every muscle of my body cringing with cold and seemingly having stiffened rigid. Flat on my back, I lay, shackled as it were, upon the chill sand without even so much as a straw beneath me, my blood coursing

frigid within my veins—frigid until I seemed benumbed as though partially lifeless and so stiffened that with utmost difficulty I turned on my side.

Meanwhile, as in a sort of delirium, that soothing “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,” reiterated continually through my mind, which words I repeated constantly to myself, pronouncing them over and over again as might some child upon learning some new word, and found fascination in its utterance.

Close about me grew the stunted growth of the Hollow, and as I lay there upon my side I looked down the long length of the great gulley out through the narrow gap and onto the ripples surface of old Michigan. The sullen, frowning bluffs that gave opening only at this narrow gap, shone white in the mellow sunlight of the late afternoon. The sun himself stood behind the high sand-mountain that towered above us, casting its sombre shadow over the entire length of the hollow, draping it with dusk and depressing chill. I found my bivouac to be near the mountain’s base on a very slight elevation and a gradual declivity of which I had been unaware last evening. Thus I was enabled to observe to a certainty our position. I commanded a fairly general

view. On either side the giant hill described a somewhat circuitous though irregular sweep; and skirting this sweep ran the hollow—somber and silent as it now lay in shadow, except for a fitful breath of wind that fanned from the lake, flitting and whispering down the great gulch. And it fanned gratefully my fevered brow as I lay there gazing listlessly about my surroundings—regardless and careless of the world as it shone sumptuously in its autumnal glory—listless as I gazed upward and watched the drift of a few fleecy clouds lazily straggle across heaven's cerulean vault—listless of their unimpaired splendor as the afternoon sun, striking obliquely upon them, bathed their upper parts snow-white, their nether parts delicious lilac. For down here beneath them, cheerless, chilling and in the pitiable plight of my extraordinary lot, the gigantic sand dune's shadow reclining across the valley, added soulless spirit to my despair.

Directly across the hollow swept the low sullen rise of a rather diminutive dune, its long ridge-crest extending the entire length of the deep gully down upon which its bleak sides frowned austere in the bask of the afternoon sun. The few dwarfed bushes that clung to its well nigh desert slopes, had dyed to dull sienna their summer coats. A fringe of sassa-

fras and scrawny poplar crowned its flattened top. One solitary and scraggy oak reared upon the summit his grotesque arms, contrasting his bronzed foliage with the dark green of three Norway pines and the whitened, weather-bleached skeleton of a long dead brother.

Thus I endured the balance of that afternoon, gazing out through the gap upon the tranquil surface, so darkly green and oily smooth, of the Great Lake, gazing dreamily over at the opposite dune's austere slopes and gazing listlessly upward into the azure blue heavens, watching those few fleecy clouds assume their sundry diversifications.

Thus, I say, I lived the balance of the afternoon—but not thus, for my poor powers of colloquy picture not a tenth my suspense and my anxiety; a tenth my dread of the uncertainty of the future and knowledge of my awaiting doom as culmination to it all, nor a tenth the agony rendered by the awful realization that on my helplessness rested solely the fortunes and futures of several innocent lives. I brooded and studied upon my extraordinary lot as I lay there upon my side staring absent-mindedly upward into the cloud flecked sky. Every phase, one by one, I attempted to extricate from the conflicting

maze of mystery; until at length, having exhausted futilely every phase mentionable, I would bring to mind all trivial incidents of the late past; but from these I would eventually drift back upon my own present enigmatical problem, and brood and ponder anew.

I could with effort move—but little more. The Breeds still lay bound and gagged, awake, though undemonstrative. Luxor, tied to my own weight, stretched beside me at full length, long, gaunt, ungainly, his head resting between his great paws, his short black coat glossing in the reflected sunlight and his spare sides heaving measuredly with each breath. Well I can see him again in the eye of my fancy, as he lay there with closed eyes, though anon opening them to reassure himself, with a fleeting glance, of my safety. How I envied his rest, his unperturbed composure, while I, with nerve-racking anxiety, must drone away the seconds of those age-like hours. I wondered, in a strange sort of way, would these age-like hours ever pass? Would midnight ever come? Would Bruce Long ever return? I wondered would I live then, because now I began apprehending death as proximate, though meaningless, feeling the terrible purport of its fathomless dread that comes to

a man—that dread born of nature and imbued immutably into the human heart—now coming to me in the guise of some vague, approaching calamity, bereft of pleasure, void of sorrow. But, after all, would it not come as a welcome deliverer?

Why had Bruce refrained from disclosing that something that night when so close upon the verge of it? Whyfore should he warn me that as I valued my life, beware no harm befell Luxor? What connecting link could exist between the life of my old dog and my own?

Thus in my languor and my insensate condition, I lived the day almost through, watching the transfiguration of the wandering clouds, until my attention became suddenly arrested by one other. It was nearing sunset. The sun had swept low into the west and into view from where I lay. The entire west was aflame; and from out its fiery expanse the blood red sun streamed his golden shafts full upon me, lengthwise, through the gap from where he hovered low above the broad margin of the lake. Then it was that a great, black thunder head suddenly thrust its gigantic bulk above the lake's horizon and, slowly ascending, blotted out the face of the magnificent orb of day.

Then instantly I started, and with the surprise of the moment, hitched myself to a sitting posture; for against the gigantic thunder-head as a background, was pictured at rest upon the motionless waters, the full-rigged but drooping sails of a small schooner.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LIGHT ON THE LAKE.

NIGHT at length came, and I expectantly awaited Bruce Long, hoping against hope that he might perchance change his mind and return before midnight, which had, in sooth, been the proposed period of his return. For with the darkness and the nightly stillness brooding heavily upon the hollow, I cringed with secret dread—dread engendered of my loneliness, my disconsolate isolation and helplessness and peril. But more anxious than merely for his companionable presence was I to learn the nature of that which he had deemed it best to withhold from me last night; the mystery of Luxor's life and my own.

An half hour of utter darkness after sunset before dim glimmerings the rising moon paled the east. Then I settled back full length and lay and watched her swing into view in the east-north-east, soaring majestically from out the black forest waste and slowly ascending, throwing in grim silhouette the ink black side of the sand mountain that cut obliquely

in perspective across her flooding radiance. . As she sailed serenely heavenward my troubled spirit stilled beneath her calm and benign splendor, and I lay staring vacantly upward into the moonlight and the starlight, with my soul soothed, lulled to care-free ennui and a sub-conscious drowse, while again through my tired brain sped softly as the purling of a babbling stream, that old familiar passage: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

Yet even so, the waiting seemed endless and every hour an age. As slowly one by one the minutes dragged past, and slowly one by one accumulated into hours, Long came not. Hour mounted hour--and still he came not; during the while the silver moon soared toward her zenith, until at length, as the late hours approached, in black gloom the precipitous side of the giant hill rose for several hundred feet above me against the brilliancy of the moonbeams.

Upon the hills and upon the Hollow and upon all nature brooded breathless calm—a ghostly calm in the wan, white moonlight. Over all hung close aground the thin hoar mist that rises during this season of the year in the lowlands at the setting of the

sun. Across the Hollow, the long lesser dune reposed mute, well nigh barren, its slope blanching lurid beneath the moon's white radiance. But for this ultra brilliancy of the moon, 'twould well have been some night of mid-summer. With the sun down, the air had warmed slightly and was now balmy, conveying to the senses the subtle touch of sweetness peculiar to mid-summer gloamings. Yet, throughout it all, brooded this unbroken silence. For the night and earth and even God's firmament itself, seemed dumb—dumb with fear and awe, fearful for that which I divined was afoot—divined through presentment. Yet, even so, I half credited this selfsame presentment to my own temperament this night and to my imagination.

A soft translucent haze in the vast dome of heaven gave access to but the brighter orbs. Through this as through some filmy veil the moon shed her silver light, herself some several degrees yet to the east of her zenith. Glorious in her full radiance she shone majestic and serene as though unaware that over in the west, over across and upon the livid and forbidding blackness of the watery plane, gradually neared the belligerent and already contending forces of the ethereal that should soon dethrone her

from her reign of this night, over our earth—forces that in their contention offered exceptional and marvellous diversion so in contrast to her peaceful and ghostly calm.

For banking her west, filling the entire west upward from its horizon, reaching out and gradually extending eastward, a black, ominous storm-cloud crept across the sky. Tier upon tier of storm-mountain was reared high heavenward into mighty thunder heads. Upon this grand frontier of cloud-play the silver moonlight streamed slantwise, tipping each rugged knob or pinnacle with purest snow—while each crevice and embrasure lay dark in deepest mauve. I lay with unabashed awe and unsuppressed appreciation as I watched them thus tower their stupendous hulks and constantly edge forward—forward upon the calm domain of nature.

The black forbidding underparts of the clouds, the black forbidding waters of the lake and all therein blended to utter oblivion—pierced solely by the blazing and flashing of afar-off tongued lightning. Dull, sullen grumbles of distant thunder rolled at intervals across the vast breadth of intermediate waters; and I noticed that the shoreward waters of the until now oily smooth bosom of the grand old

lake were by degrees becoming agitated by the aggravation on the farther deep.

And then—and then I stared, strained my eyes and stared, stared until they smarted and ached and seemed to burst their sockets. For could it be, or was it optical illusion?—that instantaneous flash, that uncertain far-away glimmer of light from out the blackness of the fast-approaching storm? Again the same feeble, flickering ray—aye, and more steady and lasting this time, then once more fading from sight. I remembered then—remember the vessel, the small sailing vessel pictured at sunset in the dead calm of the wind, full-rigged against the blackness of the gigantic thunder-head upon the horizon.

“Well, Bundy, how fares the night? Beautiful, isn’t it? And exciting too, I’ll bet, to you. Enjoying your hours of perfect leisure, I’ll wot!”

It was Bruce Long’s voice that interrupted my eye-strained observation of the light out on the lake. By his tone of voice alone I knew he was tonight his old indomitable self again, brusque, talkative and animated, not morbid and demure as last evening. He was out of breath and flushed with the exertion of his walk. He was dressed identically as last night. In the silken lapel of his coat was thrust one single

late fall woods-violet. I knew almost to a certainty and with a bitter pang at my heart, whose hand had placed it there.

"Long ways from midnight yet, but the folks were worn out and so retired early, giving me an opportunity to skip out somewhat earlier than usual."

He was thoughtful a moment, contemplatively glancing over at the breeds.

"Nice state of affairs, this here: two dogs tied away from two others. One dog tied to another. Two dogs tied away from the first dog; one dog tied away from the other two, and all four dead anxious to get at each other's throats. Fancy complication of friendships, I must say! Reckon the breeds must have been chatting sociably with those wooden plugs in their mouths! Overheard any objections, Bundy? Lord, they must love me for this! Anyhow their love's returned in ample amount, because I sure do love them."

"Then with a smile Long turned to me.

"I'd as soon and with as few scruples shoot the dogs where they lie as bruise the heads of so many rattlers!" I watched his hand seek involuntarily his hip pocket, a cynical smile compressing his thin lips.

"But come! Time presses. I'm only going to stay a couple of minutes else I get soaked. That storm's coming up pretty fast; and it's going to be a big one too. Here, I've brought you a few bites. Dispose of what little there is in as short order as possible; divide with Luxor, while I build a little blaze here for your temporary comfort."

While talking he had cut the thongs from my wrists and ankles, untied Luxor from me, handed me a small package of luncheon, wrapped in heavy paper and bound with strong hemp cord, and then set about kindling the fire. He was building it of brushwood and starting it with a few dry leaves. Repeatedly it refused to burn and several matches he wasted—matches which were, every one, a treasure in my eyes—and while he strove with the fire, I, in turn, strove to undo the cords from about my luncheon, until suddenly a ruse flashed into my mind.

"I give it up, Long, trying to open this lunch, these knots which you have managed to make are as hard as rocks. My fingers are numb from cold and their late bandage. Here, open it for me. I'm well nigh starved."

"What'll you have to say in a couple of weeks

from now about being starved, if you're starved already? Last night you affirmed a man didn't starve in a day. Luckily, opinions vary. But no matter, hand it here. That fire at last does act like business. Guess it's going to blaze some after all!"

I watched him, an anxious thought in mind. He did as I had planned, whipped out his pocket knife and slashed in twain the cords. But even as he cut them, I seized him roughly by the arm. "Look!" I cried and pointed lakewards. He started. "What!" he gasped and the words died on his lips, for, at the instant, true to my plans, the light out on the lake had flashed. He had seen. "My God!" he exclaimed, and then again,— "My God!" It seemed that he could not force another word from his lips.

"Don't you see it?" I fairly shouted with compelled enthusiasm, my stratagem paramount in mind. I was all but non-plussed by this extraordinary behavior of his, so unexpected. "Don't you see it, sir; don't you see the light—that light out there on the lake?"

He brushed a hand across his face as though brushing away cobwebs.

"Is this a dream?" I heard him softly articulate

though I perforce bent closer to him in order to catch his words.

“Not unless I too, am dreaming,” I made answer. But at the same time I clutched his hand gently within mine—his which held the knife—and, to my surprise, I found his hand colder than my own cold one and clammy with perspiration and the fingers twitching with nervous contortion. Gradually and unbeknown to him I eased the small steel prize into my own grasp, thence slipped it into the ground and buried it with my free hand, meantime continuing my discourse upon the light.

“It’s a vessel, Long, a small, sailing schooner, a lumber-barge mayhap. She’s lain out there becalmed all day. See, the light flashes again! It’s a feeble ray to carry up no better than that. She’s not so very far out, either. Perchance a few miles, I should judge, maybe less. Rather close ashore to face a storm from that quarter. Chances are she’ll have a tough time of it before this night is done.”

Almost with alarm on my part, I found Bruce momentarily becoming more unnerved, very strangely, mysteriously unnerved. We both were kneeling together, close beside our newly kindled fire, whose warmth was dispelling the chill from my lately be-

numbed limbs—crackling furiously much too near Long for his comfort, methought. But far was he from noting the heat. Instead he knelt there beside me, my hand hold of his arm, my voice loud in his ear—knelt there more like unto some stony image than an actual living, breathing man. He leaned far forward, his face out-thrust, hands clenched, arms clutched at his sides, their muscles rigid and a-tremble with some unaccountable emotion, his breath but gasps. For a fleeting moment I confess that I bethought me of treachery, of seizing this opportunity, of pinning him suddenly to earth while helpless in this strange inebriation of his, and—but suddenly he thwarted my sinister designs by springing to his feet and striding rapidly to and fro across the cleared area about the fire, his eyes never flinching from off that intermittent ray of light out on the lake. His face shone ashy gray in the wan beams of the firelight and the moonbeams as they alternately played upon him in his pacing. His mouth was downward drawn; the left corner twitched convulsively. A scowl furrowed his fine forehead. His eyelids narrowed to slits; and in all, not only his physiognomy, but his entire physical delineation was haggard; his cheeks seemed suddenly to have sunken

away; he was hollow-eyed; his lower jaw drooped dejectedly; he seemed utterly worn out with not only physical but also mental fatigue. His shoulders stooped, and although his pace was rapid it was with a slouching gait that he strode restively before the fire.

I no longer withheld, but commenced eating, sharing with Luxor piece by piece, and dividing my attention betwixt my meal and Bruce pacing there several yards away, oblivious to aught but yon fickle, flickering flame out on the lake. I had finished my scant repast before he somewhat controlled himself.

“Dave,” he exclaimed at length and his voice broke huskily and without modulation; “Dave, do you believe in presentiment? Do you believe in warnings? In premonitions which come whence we know not? Do you believe in intuition which augurs impending evil—feel it, yet cannot account for its presence, for its influence upon you? I’ll not venture to call it supernatural manifestation. I’ll not venture to call it anything. But, Bundy, do you believe in such things?”

“Why, yes, I believe I do,” I replied hesitatingly, wondering at his questions.

“Then Dave, surely you’ll not laugh at me when

I tell you that I saw that light out there before I came here tonight—yet knew better than to credit my eyesight. I've seen it a thousand times before seeing it tonight—seen it a thousand times on a thousand different nights—yet knew better than to credit my eyesight. Dave, boy, I've seen that light all my life—and knew better than to credit my eyes. But now that you too see it out there, I know that it at last is there in reality. Though God alone knows why it is there in reality. For myself I only know that it bodes something—something which surely touches me, touches my very existence perhaps. God will that it be so! Oh my God!" and astonished I saw him raise his face and hands heavenward. "Oh my God! Help me through this night, I beseech thee! Check her that she may be powerless to wreak further vengeance upon the one who comes!"

"But, ah, gads, Bundy, this seems blasphemy to invoke divine assistance against such occultism as hers. Would that I had known how to prepare for this ordeal beforehand; she should not now be seated within the stronghold of her invulnerable power. Curse her! and I'm careless that she hears!" though his voice sank low with the final sentence.

"I'm not raving, Bundy. This is not depravity

which causes these words and actions of mine, words and actions which are meaningless to you; far from it, man! Suppose, for one instant, that you stood in my shoes; suppose you knew not your earthly equity to exist; suppose you were hampered and governed by such a one as she—would you not hate her? Rebel against her? Strive to rid yourself of her? For all my hatred she only laughs and continues to command me more! Great Lord! Won't I ever taste freedom!"

Then after an interval of silence, he went on:

"Last night they burned my "medicine," Bundy. Something cannot but be the outcome of that dastardy trick of Francois. You sacriligious scoundrel!" and he whirled upon the helpless Breeds. "I've a smart notion to balance accounts with you right here." Then he smiled in a satisfied sort of way. "But even so perchance we'll come out even in the end. Here, now stand up there, Dominique. Wait a minute. Francois, now you. Don't you dare offer to balk. You're the one whom I most dearly love, so I forewarn you to step gingerly on my toes henceforth. Now both of you move. Turn about there and march. Lively now. No more dilly-dallying with me. Understand? Good-night!"

For he had with their own knives cut their ankle thongs and assisted each in turn to his feet, though he refrained from releasing their hands. With difficulty they retained their standing equilibrium during a few moments stamping, endeavoring to start the circulation in their deadened lower limbs. He complaisantly resheathed their knives in their belts, though while he handled them my heart stood still, fearful that he should detect the absence of his own knife, but fortune favored me.

The Breeds gone, Long returned to me.

"Bundy, my brain's a-whirl and seems a-blaze. I feel though that I'm to win out in this matter. For all that I'm determin'd to and when a man is determined, it's half winning the game. Seems that I can't compel my eyes to leave that light out there for an instant. It draws me with singular fascination. Gash, but the storm's waxing mightier every minute! See, it's almost upon us; yet those clouds up there seem to hesitate and slink back over the water as though dreading to sweep ashore. Wish they might see fit to keep hesitant. Remarkable how they do perform up there now. Notice how they rise and revolve over one another, then charge backward into themselves."

I gazed aloft. The whirling, writhing mass of blue-black, white crested wind-clouds strung in a gigantic ribbon from north to south, were sweeping from the west at a terrific speed. But as Bruce had declared, they evinced reluctance to encounter the land; for they seemed to rise perceptibly, whirling and revolving in a churn-mass, then charge backward upon their own ranks. I knew that this maneuvering might last some several minutes. I had known former storms to perform likewise, even to disband, in order, as it were, to muster additional force for some sudden, stupendous onslaught.

Meanwhile Bruce talked.

“All signs have foretokened this storm for some days past. Rings have appeared nightly around the moon; last night a strikingly vivid one, though you, Dave, could not see it from the hollow because of the midnight mists. The sun has set repeatedly with after-glows. Vast displays of nebula have covered the heavens at times. The old lake out there has lain a deep indigo, today streaked with long threads of jet black—a bad sign. Wild geese hurried southward all day today. I’ll not be surprised at a cold snap. Indian summer generally manages to end with just such a storm. Moccasin told me several

days ago that it was due before long, and that it was to be a big one. I presume he has scores of signs foretelling weather of which we have no knowledge. Well, I know he can predict almost to a surety a cold winter from an open one by fox-fur, by a goose's breast-bone, by the leaves on an oak tree, by crows and jay birds and a dozen other animals. Then, Bundy, if all such things may be counted on, how about dreams and presentiments, hallucinations, optical illusions and day visions? How about them, Dave? Can't a man count on these just as likely as on the bodings of nature? That raging storm out there has been prognosticated by a half hundred phenomena. Then why in the name of common sense, has not yonder light been preordained as well? Why, Bundy, I've been pestered all my life by that flashing, wavering will-o-the-wisp out there. Many the night have I watched among these hills—generally from the mountain top up there—watched throughout the long tedious hours of darkness till dawn—till daylight came and revealed my delusion, my chimera, my hallucination or whatever it may have been; for just so long as darkness would prevail, that flickering, wavering will-o-the-wisp would stand out there across the waters and

flash and flicker and beckon to me night after night, until once I actually did put out to sea in one of these birch bark cockle-shells, intent upon following the false flame. I did follow it, but daylight overtook me. My quest awarded naught. And now but that you see it with your eyes, I would fain discredit my eye-sight as of old. What shall be the consequences of its appearance now in actually, God alone may know. Would that I did! There's more than her infernal machinations afoot tonight, Bundy, for I feel somehow that just as sure as there's a God in heaven, Dave, that more infinite power than her's shall be manifested before this night is out."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WOMAN OF THE BROW-VEIL

“I HAD a most singular experience while on my way from the East, Dave. It occurred in Detroit. It was the day of my arrival there after a tedious trip aboard ship across Lake Erie. I had just landed my horse—my saddler, you know—when I bethought me that a little canter might enliven my spirits after the fatigue of the voyage.

“I had ridden about town a goodly while, when, toward late afternoon I passed a gentleman and lady driving behind a spirited team. The man wore a military uniform; the woman wore a heavy black veil drooped to her eyebrows. I noticed nothing more; thought nothing more of the matter.

“Probably an hour or so later I was near the outskirts of the town. Glancing into a side street, I saw in the distance ahead, in the center of the square, people congregated and in evident excitement over something in their midst. The crowd had collected near the foot of a gigantic sycamore tree—the hollow

trunked sycamore in which tradition claims Pontiac established his headquarters during his siege of the fort. Thinking it over since, the location of the accident impressed me as strikingly remarkable.

"I galloped up to the crowd and inquired the cause for the same. A woman, a man informed me, had been thrown out of a carriage and stunned, though otherwise not seriously injured. The horses had shied, the man informed me, at the giant sycamore, acting as though they had seen something that violently startled them. My informant, himself, he stated, had been an eyewitness, and though he observed carefully, he had failed to notice anything that could have alarmed them. I learned furthermore, that the man and woman were strangers thereabouts. I considered the affair lightly and after endeavoring to obtain a glimpse of the woman, in which I failed because of the size of the crowd, I rode away.

"Meanwhile, I decided to remain a day or two in Detroit before riding across the state. The evening of the following day I met my interlocutor of the accident on the street and accosted him, bent upon inquiring of the woman's recovery, or whether her

swoon had materialized into anything passing serious.

“‘Far’s I know she came out o’ it all sound enough,’ he said. Gads, I’ll remember his very words to my grave! ‘But I can tell you, sir,’ he went on, ‘there’s something mighty baffling erbout that there woman. They as tended her, helping in reviving her, swear that she had a most mysterious brand on her for’head. Comely enough woman, they as know say, excepting for that bafflin’ brand o’ her’n.

“‘A brand?’ I inquired, ‘what sort of a brand was it, sir?’ And I could with difficulty control my voice in my anxiety.

“‘Tattooing,’ he answered, ‘Yes, they that know, claim she was tatoood on her for’ead, a right clever piece o’ tatoooin’—an eye, it was, they claim, sir; a human eye—an’ thet she wore the veil to keep folks from seeing it there. Folks air doin’ some talking, sir, I warrant ye thet.’

“Bundy, you can well imagine the effect of his words upon me. But I managed, none the less, to conceal their effect and continued questioning him in the matter. But, Dave, though I drained every clue to its dregs, the gist of all the information I ever succeeded in procuring was simply that she as

well as the man had been total strangers in Detroit and that immediately after the accident, they had embarked on a small sailing schooner bound to the head of Lake Michigan. That's all I know, Dave, but since then, that light out there has haunted me waking or asleep. God, but that this night were ended!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WOLF.

“**A**ND one thing more, Dave,” he went on, “what the deuce might Martha have meant tonight when she asked me the last thing upon retiring—asked me about some track or something lying in the forest. What the devil could the girl have been driving at?”

“Tell me, Bruce, in the name of Heaven, tell me, man,” and I could not repress an awful anxiety, “has she mentioned my absence—has she seemed to miss me—does she show in any way any sorrow?”

He framed with his lips a calculating smile, and hesitating deliberately revelled in my ingenious solicitude.

“Why do you ask?” at length he answered. “What right have you to expect concern on her part? Why should she grieve for her father’s murderer? Far less, even breathe a syllable of his despicable name? God forbid that she should! No, Dave, I doubt that she has—should scarce think she should

—should far less expect her to, if I were you. No, decidedly no! I doubt if she gives your absence second thought. I should little expect it of her.”

A blow from him would have stunned me less. My senses reeled for a moment madly, but withal their reeling, I glimpsed the light.

“Look ye here, Long,” I blurted out finally with flashing ire, “I warn you not to maliciously lie thus to me—me who am here virtually impaled on your talons, as you were wont to put it last night. You can’t make me believe that she minds not my absence, she whom I have known every moment for ten years, she who’s more than sister, more than life to me for aught of your braggart deceit last night—you can’t tell me that Martha has not wondered at my prolonged absence. Why, man, ’tis the longest we’ve ever been separated since knowing one another—since that night you stole me from the house and brought me to these hills. And, if as you say, she has not mentioned my absence to you, then she’s aware of more than either of us credit her with knowing.

I saw him flinch beneath my countering blow.

“Bundy,” and his voice trembled, “you’re right, I do believe. You’ve merely confirmed my own

suspicious. What she meant by that damned track lying in the forest is far from me to understand. But there's something afoot, I've no room to doubt. Old Moccasin is alive and awake, or else I'm a numskull worse than a fool. Bundy, tonight is to witness more than either of us dare dream. What's that, Bundy! Look!—See it? Over there, over across on the low white slope of the sand ridge—see it? That dark object there? See it move? See it slink down hill with the sliding sand? Tell me, Bundy, what is it, man or beast?"

"A brute forsooth, in either case," I replied, striving for evasion. One of the Breeds, methinks, spying upon us here at our fire, or mayhap a prowling wolf or bob-cat lured by our fire."

"I was a fool to ever light it!" Bruce fairly growled, so guttural was his ejaculation. "It's spying in either case, and Bundy, I again repeat that I don't fancy the taste of what's afoot tonight. See, the thing's slipped down hill and into the brush. I don't like the guise of the thing; it's not always a wolf that skulks in a wolf-hide hereabouts. No sir. It don't taste pleasantly tonight. That light out there got my nerve—But why the hell do I tell you this!—why play the fool every word I utter! Gash, boy! I've

told you everything, everything—confided in you like some fellow counselor, when, in fact, you're a prisoner. Why I've confided in you at all, everything is beyond accounting even to myself; perhaps because you're so entirely within my clutches and I disdain your individual power. Furthermore, I'm lonesome, Bundy, downright lonesome, and I don't care a whit if you know you're the sole confidant I have on this earth and that I've probably played the fool in making you so; but those are cold facts whether you appreciate them or not and for all that, I'm careless one whit for your appreciation."

Meanwhile the storm out over the lake had increased, had approached gradually shorewards, had congested into one utter black mass of banked cloud that now seemed suddenly to surge forward. Prolonged, distance-drowned thunder bore upon the night. A tremulous flash of lightning illuminated the vast breadth of darkened waters. A trifling breath of air came now for the first time off the lake, wafting lithesomely adown the hollow to us, stirring gently the frost-crisped foliage that hedged us round about. A few leaves quivered and parted their stems from their twigs, and, fluttering to earth, rustled softly in the stillness of the night.

At the same time there sounded a light patter of feet and a scurry in the carpeted leaves, and underneath the low bushes I saw a cotton tail whisk past.

A low whine and a short, sharp bark, and Luxor was gone from my side and a moment later, from sight, away like a voracious shadow. For a few succeeding seconds his voice held still, and then came his full, deep-throated bay pealing out upon the still night air in the long-drawn, ringing and lingering melodies of his nature's song of the blood-lust, pitched in deep major key.

Together we sat at a loss whether to call or let him go, sending his heart's call echoing through the silent and shadowy valleys and over the hills. Already 'twas too late to thwart any effect that might arise now because of this break of his; and with my own summoning whistle sounding now, would it serve to allay or goad any danger lurking for us unseen? I was close upon the point of risking it when a twig snapped over on our right, and glancing there, I beheld a few yards off, Francois.

He stood erect and motionless, looking at me; and one hand grasped a bunch of brush behind which I surmised that until now he had lain ambushed, eavesdropping upon us. I nudged Bruce,

and he with instant perspicacity, followed my glance, and himself beheld the Breed. With an angry oath snarling in his throat, he lurched forward to his feet, the revolver gleaming in his outstretched hand. Well might I fear an eruption. Francois, facing Bruce, seemed to quail and shrink visibly—shrink like some feline settling for a spring. At the same time with slothful mien he slouched forward a pace. A truculent grimace seamed his dark, sensual face a virulent, rebellious, insolent leer that rendered his malignant visage as expressive of congested storm as yonder growls of thunder. Then for an instant he paused, his low-drooping brow contracted with an ominous scowl, a malignant curl to his upper lip, his black blood-shot eyes a-glitter with hatred—and for that moment, while he paused, the cast of that dissolute countenance stamped upon my memory the most pronounced characterization of malignancy ever my lot to have witnessed. His left hand rested significantly upon the handle of his belt-hung knife; a heavy cudgel he clutched in his right; and his entire attitude expressed but one purpose—treachery and murder. My heart quaked within me at the thought of the possible outcome of this scene.

During the while, loud and lingering, old Luxor's voice broke upon the night. I confess that for the instant that Francois and Bruce faced one another, a dread, hysterical oppression weighed within me and a stifling sensation surged within my throat that rendered my breath an exertion and myself weak with nervous fear. I strove vainly to muster my recreant powers; I cursed inly my flagging strength and charged myself to launch forthwith into this impending catastrophe. And for aught of me, it seems some over-guarding adverse power restrained me, for on a sudden and on this instant, I became aware of some other nearby presence—became aware through intuition—for I wheeled half-about and looking, sat frozen to the ground, powerless even to lift so much as a finger. A needle seemed to pierce even my eyeballs, and, traveling through, multiply itself into innumerable points that distributed themselves throughout me in a travail of shooting, darting threads of fire. For the moment I know full sure that I lost all sensibility, and I know that I sat there, glaring into those ravenous eye-balls that glared back into mine, I was as a man half dead with hypnotic charm, for, today, it all seems but some sudden transient incubus of my distorted

brain. For there within three feet of me, I was glaring at two unsightly eye-cavities back of which were two wildly lighted eye-balls of a huge gray wolf!

Then, with an awful effort, I somewhat regained mastery over myself.

I clambered instantly to my feet, and cowered before this terrible creature, that doggedly slunk forward upon me as I moved backward from it. A panic of terror strove with me, battling against my restraining will power. I tried to cry out to Bruce, but my voice refused utterance. I tried to apprise myself of his attitude in this scene, but my sight refused to leave its pinioned stare upon this loathsome creature at my feet, brushing now almost against me.

A creature loathsome and terrible it verily was; the eyes alight with fiendish fire, glittered wolfish; the loose, shaggy hide was wolfish; but far otherwise than wolfish was its standing attitude and its lolling, shambling gait and its quaint standing posture. No exertion was traceable and it lolled forward low to earth, for it moved with well nigh the ease and grace of a sliding reptile, though without the writhing; more like some object of animation

impelled by ulterior force. Though huge and square, it was short, broad and ill-proportioned; a creature withal repulsive, uncanny and horrible. I could but recoil before it, my gaze still riveted upon those unsightly eyes.

Then something seemed suddenly to give way, to burst within my brain, to explode with a loud report. A dull whirring sound began revolving in my ears. Gray fog of tangible thickness seemed about me. I recall that which followed as might some maniac the scenes and horror enacted during an attack of violent raving. I remember dimly of edging into the encircling brush, still retreating before that loathsome creature. I remember a strange frenzy seizing me—a frenzy to flee. Thenceforward the few fleeting moments is a blank in my mind. I remember not at all, neither do I recall anything that occurred. But the next recollection of mine is that of tearing and pushing my way through an entanglement of vegetation, of breaking through bushes and rending a passage through the tenacious rope-like ivies and vines that in confusion draped well nigh everything, living or dead; that I seemed amid prison walls of green against which I must needs battle and beat frantically and blindly, re-

gardless of destination. During this while, without cessation, rising and falling in undulating volume, a wild, taunting laugh rang through the air. I tripped and fell. A heavy body pounced upon me and pinned me down. I struggled desperately to rise but with utter futility. I strove to turn myself underneath this adverse weight, but sank lower than ever, closer to the earth, exhausted; and I detected labored breathing accompanied by a guttural laugh and I recognized Dominique. I found myself bereft of motion, unable to so much as stir a limb. Something clothlike and of many folds muffled my face, blinding me, nigh smothering me to the point of strangulation. Then I felt myself lifted roughly, jostled a moment, then pitched across shoulders. I knew myself carried to some distance before being cast hurtfully and violently to earth and abandoned to what fate I might only guess—ANTS!

CHAPTER XX.

THE ANTS.

OH, the horror of it and the torture of it! He only may know who has endured them—endured the crawling of them into his eyes, into his ears, and into his mouth, the crawling of them into his throat, aye, even their struggling into his lungs! Only he who has suffered the torture of their incisors piercing his skin, the prickling of their sting-armed legs over his body—only he of such experience may know the horror of my impending doom.

Rationality returned slowly. I lay prone, my face buried in the loose soil beneath me. Profound stillness reigned about me save for the continuous claps of thunder that clashed loudly and went rippling away into distance. I lay entwined in thongs, powerless to shift myself an inch. My brain throbbed with surging blood. My heart beat frantically within my chest. My breathing was with utmost difficulty. Hot flashes swept over me, alternating with qualms of nausea and chill. A blinding glare of intense

light shone before my eyes. Dull rumbling muttered constantly in my ears, broken solely by the actual mutterings of the nearing thunder. Thus through it all I lay and listened expectantly, dreadfully, for the report of Long's pistol shot. I knew to a full surety that as yet it had not broken upon the hollow's quietude. I could but wonder how things were with him.

How long thus I lay I do not know. I have no trace of time save through the raging of the storm. It broke with instant and intense fury, and while I lay there, I knew solely through hearing that it waxed mighty and terrible. A veritable down pour drenched me through and through. I all but sank unconscious beneath its onslaught. Several times the electricity tingled through my blood as lightning cracked and struck close by. The constant crashes of thunder reeled my brain with giddiness! Wierd phantasies toyed with my imagination. Time and again I wondered were I numbered with the dead—were I living, or could it be my spirit was enduring some hateful torture. Time after time I strove and with partial success, to collect my full senses only to have them drift from me with tantalizing persistency.

Yet throughout it all I remained sufficiently con-

fidant as to my sanity to feel sure that no shot had been fired by Bruce Long.

I still retained an impression, faint though and intangible, which caused me to believe that I drowsed, for what length of time I do not know. But well do I recall with horror, aye, with horror that verged to madness, that suddenly the fiery, reeking venom of a snake smote my nostrils, a fiery irritation that cauterized my lungs, turned me sick at stomach and set my brain wild with delirium. I heard its rattle close beside me and its hiss beside my face. Each successive second I lay in dread, in dread of its fangs seeking hold in my flesh. I writhed in awful agony, such agony as elsewhere I have never endured. Its rancor filled my brain to bursting with consuming fire and a fit of choking seized my throat—choking which, on a sudden, changed to strangulation, tight and convulsing, sapping my life with a sudden wrench.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WRECK.

A DULL, monotonous sound like the low crooning of winds was the first thing that dawned on my understanding. Gradually it swelled in volume until with a rush, the bellows of the angered lake were loud within my ears. An almost ungovernable longing to sleep overswept me, I fought awakening. With hazy apprehension I felt a wave dash into my face only to sooth strangely, pleasantly. A second wave washed me, then I opened my eyes.

Utter blackness encased me. I turned myself and glanced in each direction to find naught but this selfsame darkness. Involuntarily I reached out to thrust it from me, impelled by the sense of its density, for it seemed to bear with stiffling pressure upon me. I smiled to myself as the folly of this impulse came to me in the true light.

Yet withal a delightful ecstasy thrilled me. I was happy in the extreme. The bellows of the lake were as music in my ears. A deafening crash of

thunder that went rolling in long-drawn reverberations above me was for me but amusement. I laughed outright and the sound of my laugh, unnatural and hoarse as it was, lugubrious and resembling more some madman's cackle, only caused me to laugh again loudly, hysterically. As I laughed this latter time, the thunder peal had drifted into the distance and merely the lake's bellows combated its volume. But even as my throat yet gurgled in my maniacal frenzy, a startled exclamation that bespoke gladness, sounded above me, and someone knelt beside me, two hands fondly found my own and pressed them close. Two lips lightly touched my forehead and then a soft cheek lay upon mine, while a voice wrung with tenderness and pathos, spoke softly to me.

"Ah, Dave, how I thank God that you've come to. Oh, if you but knew how I've prayed here beside you. God be praised that you live and are now conscious!"

I answered not. Full rationality was mine now. My heart surged within my bosom as I silently breathed a word of thanksgiving to God; and reaching up, my arms closed her in my embrace and I held her to me long and tenderly, our lips pressed

close. A score of conflicting passions and emotions played upon me. Bruce Long's threats and insinuations jumbled as a mass into my mind only to be expelled instantly, for now, Ah, God! I knew them as lies!

"Martha!" I whispered after a time, "Martha, Thank God!"

A rough, wet tongue licked my face. As I spoke his name, I reached up and placed an arm about his long, lean body. I can feel him yet, how he responded to my caresses, how he staggered clumsily against me and hugged me close, his long nose snuggling at my neck, one paw resting across my shoulder.

"You owe him everything, Dave. He took us to you."

"Took?" I asked. "Us?"

"Yes. You're not now where we found you, Moccasin and I. Moccasin is standing here in the dark beside you, Dave, though you can't see him. It'll lightning in a minute, then look."

Hardly had she said as much when a brilliant flash swept the heavens, quivering an instant with a blinding glare. But during its glare I had looked and had seen. Scarce ten feet away Moccasin

stood with a lofty poise to his admirable stature, though I was far from expecting him thus regaled. His arms were folded across his breast; grandeur and dignity were expressive throughout him as a whole, though his noble brow betrayed a pensible droop and this droop was perchance emphasized by the black streaks of war paint that crossed and recrossed one another, branching from between his shaggy brows. Fierce and warlike as some war-god himself might well be, he was studying me with almost terrifying intensity and I could but quake for a moment beneath his savagery. He was naked above the waist, as was his custom, and his massive chest glowed crimson with paint. A long plait of his hair hung across one shoulder. A solitary eagle feather leaned awry above one ear. He was unarmed except his hatchet; but across an elbow was thrown what I instantly recognised, an uncouth imitation of the animal himself, the beaver-skin of yesterday, now dried to small proportion, and stuffed to grotesque shape.

A second flash of lightning quickly succeeded the first and in its flare his eyes found mine. A piercing glitter shot from their black depths and he changed his attitude to sudden solicitation, and



The Black Bulk of a Ship.

stooping low he spoke and with grave monotone—and never shall I forget one syllable of his deep throated Pottawattamie.

“Son of my Brother,” he spoke, “the medicines of the red-men are at war tonight. They have darkened the face of the moon that the palefaces may walk where their eyes cannot find the path. But the eyes of a Pottawattamie see in the dark. His medicine tells him where he shall go. It tells him to fear the red-men’s medicines which are at war. They also tell him that the Son of my Brother is in need of a medicine, that he needs big medicine, that he needs it very much and that it must be big. The medicines of Topinabe are good. They are big and of great worth. The Son of my Brother needs a medicine. IT IS HIS!”

He thrust the beaver-pelt into my grasp and I felt rather than discerned in the darkness that he moved from above me. I heard Martha softly laugh. None the less I could but treasure the thing and thrust it within my homespun shirt for safe-keeping.

“You’re as superstitious, Dave, I do believe, as Moccasin himself. He’s been talking incessantly about medicine the whole night long. You’re too

weak yet to sit up. Don't even try. This is a good place here. We may as well stay until daylight anyhow. We're on the north side of the Hollow, right at the foot of the bluff where the Hollow opens on the beach. The bluff partially shields us from the wind. We carried you here from where we found you, or rather from where 'Lux' led us. We heard his bay and called him when he circled near us. Then he took us to you. I honestly believe he's as intelligent as some people."

"But how and why are you all here, Martha? I can scarce believe my senses, you venturing like this."

"I coaxed Moccasin to come with me, coaxed him hard, Dave, before he would. I felt sure we would find you here, for I followed Bruce clear to the mouth of the Hollow tonight alone. Then I went back after Moccasin. But I don't see into it, Dave,—what it's all about; why we found you as you were, tied to an ant-hill, and unconscious."

"Was there anything," I queried, shuddering at the recollection, "around my neck?"

"Nothing which we saw. Why?"

"Only I thought perhaps I had been choked with a rope," I replied evasively.

"You were in a faint, that was all, though for a long while I feared you were dead. We revived you with water."

So were explained the wave dashes in my face.

"You're a dear, brave girl!" I whispered. "You've saved my life. I owe you everything and I—I love you, Martha, I love you!"

"And I you, my poor brave boy," she answered, and my heart gave a great leap. Then after a moment "Where's Bruce?" she asked. And she reverted so suddenly from me to him that my heart almost mis-gave me.

"God alone knows," I answered stoutly. "Heaven trust that he still lives!"

I heard her catch her breath.

"Is he in danger?" she exclaimed in a startled whisper, and I felt her hands grow cold in mine. I strove to control the tremor that crept into my voice as I admitted, "He was when last I saw him."

"Then we must go to him at once," she announced determinedly. "Where is he?"

"Over across there in the Hollow," and I pointed an arm in the darkness but a flash of lightning showed it up.

"Wait then till we return. You're too weak to

go with us. Tell us his location as best as you can. Moccasin can find the place. We'll take Luxor along. We'll come back to you as soon as possible. Tell us now just where you left him for we must—"

A feeble flash played upon the darkness—a flash, but not of lightning. Instead, out over the lake, a long thread of fire shot upward, curving when high in the air, then slowly descending, died from view.

"A rocket, Dave!" Martha gasped. "A distress signal! What can it mean?"

"It's a vessel, Martha. She's lain out there, becalmed, all day."

Until then I must confess, I had given not the slightest heed to the strength of the storm. Until now I had failed to note that a terrific wind was sweeping past us, sweeping in off the lake, though broken in part, for us, by the protection of the bluff above us. Lying, as I was, flat upon the ground, I had not felt its full force until incited by the rocket, I suddenly sat upright. The full blast then caught me direct and I could with difficulty hold myself against the fury, until with an arm, I propped myself as I sat. It blew against my face, muffling my face as it were, until in order to intake breath I was forced to bend low and shield my face with my free hand.

I now realized for the first time that a storm was on, a mighty one, that a gale was blowing such as I had seldom seen, though Michigan is no peaceable body and I had lived on her shore for years.

A scant rain still clung in the air, drizzling along with the wind, and a decided chill sent a shiver through my meager clothing, betokening increasing coldness for the weather before many hours.

Lighted occasionally by the lightning, the great Lake lay before us a writhing plain of white, lashed into endless foam and white-crested combers which came booming shoreward, bellowing hoarsely and rushing headlong upon the beach, to spread out over the white, gleaming strand and to recede only in part till some fellow wave spent in turn its fury on the thirsty sand. The lightning had somewhat died down from what it had been in the earlier part of the storm. Thunder answered each flash but neither so loud nor lasting as previously, in that the weather had changed to such a degree of coldness. Sand and small gravel, carried along by the wind, hissed past and stung and bit into the skin as it struck the hands and face, and I could but marvel how Moccasin had stood there so calmly with his unprotected back to the gale and withstood the onslaught

of the stinging grit. Nor had I appreciated to the slightest degree until this moment, Martha's fortitude in thus braving the tempest and rescuing me from my recent peril.

Out over the raging waters a second rocket now arose, and, as we watched it, 'twas easily discerned that it rose nearer than the former one. Another quickly followed, but proved the last. No other came though we waited long in strained expectancy. Long we waited, I say,—aye, and a tedious watch, as well, it proved, with neither of us venturing a word, until after an age, seemingly, Martha broke the silence. She was kneeling close beside me, shielded partly by me from the wind. As she spoke I turned to her during a lightning flash, and never shall I loose the wild beauty of her as I remember it to this day.

A small red shawl clung about her shoulders, one end loose and flapping in the wind, her uncovered hair blue-black, streamed straight and disheveled by the gale. Her arms were bared to the shoulders, one clinging across her bosom to hold in check her recreant shawl, while her other reached out and clung tenderly to me, thrown across my shoulder and about my neck. Her face was flushed in her

excitement, the flush of her cheeks slowly blending to the pallor about her drawn lips. Her eyes shone wild with well-nigh frenzied light as she gazed out over the storm-tossed sea, and as she interrupted our prolonged quiet, her voice bore to me through the shriek of the gale in but a harsh whisper.

"Think you she can live, Dave? Surely no craft can for long endure such seas. If earthly aid can help her—but, ah, me! what can we do! That last signal was nearer, I thought, than the first. She's blowing ashore, and she'll thrash to fragments in such a surf. Moccasin," she announced suddenly, "we must find Bruce."

"'Twere impossible," I protested, "to find him such a night in such a jungle as this about us. 'Tis folly to consider such a move. Don't bother yourself. Bruce is able to care for himself. Furthermore, what could you do against—"

"Look!" she shouted, pointing seaward, "I saw the ship that flash!"

Silence fell upon us, strained breathlessness during which we peered through the darkness out across the vast plain of whitened waters. A sheet of lightning quivered in the far west, and out upon that mighty breadth of pitching billows, I glimpsed for a

fleeting instant, the black bulk of a ship tossed high against the blackness of the clouded horizon. Then darkness closed down, and we saw no more.

No further communication passed between us. We sat immovable and dumb as the speechless bluff above us. Martha merely slipped more closely to me, but now, instead of one, both her arms clung about me, and my own stole out and about her and I clasped her fondly to my bosom. For once I confess I was mindless of the tempest and its intended victim.

How long we may have waited I dare scarce estimate, but I recall it now not as the lapsing of time, but rather as heart-breaking stress through which we waited and watched and listened with fear and anxiety gnawing within us. An endless waiting we endured until at length, suddenly a violent blaze of electricity flooded the heavens, lingering and gradually diminishing in minor flashes and flickerings, illuminating for several moments to the brightness of day, the froth-crested expanse of lake.

But during its brief duration we had witnessed that which sent the blood cold in my veins and my heart heavy with depressing ache, yet held me with intense fascination. For close upon us, close upon

the beach and close upon destruction, scarce sixty rods from the shore line, the doomed vessel was rearing and careening upon the rollers, flinging herself high in sharp silhouette against the electric blazoned heavens. She was drifting broadside on and her spars loomed tall and square in grim outline against the sky. She was a small barque, a schooner common to the lakes, a type of lumber transportation still in usage. Merely a plaything she seemed in the grip of the waves, a cripple at the mercy of some invisible foe. She had lifted over the third sand bar, but the huge rollers had driven her hard upon the second where she now lay floundering and battering upon the surf. Her rigging seemed still intact, though each comber washed across her, and in the glare of the flickering lightning I descried one figure dangling at the mast; and so defined was it that I saw 'twas not the figure of a sailor or that of a man. Rather I saw to a certainty her dress and her dangling hair. God! Could she survive! Then slowly the lightning died away in a few faint flickers and no more followed to apprise us of her condition except one single feeble glimmer that came after a time and revealed to us the schooner lying

heavily upon her side with her spars and rigging no longer rearing against the sky.

That we waited with heavy silence upon us is to say the least. During the while, the chill of the air grew to piercing cold, bringing with it instead of the scant drizzle, a stinging sleet which drove against us in our unprotected state. Together in a close huddle, Martha and I bent beneath the gale's blasts. How I withstood it well as I did I cannot say. How the torture of it all remains as a blank in my memory is more than I can understand, for aught that I recall of it is of crouching there close to earth and enduring it with the patience of a dumb brute. I remember that after an endless time, at length I raised my head from out the protecting shelter of my arms and found that the gray dawn was creeping into the east, and that the storm had broken; and through the rifted clouds as they swiftly sailed by, I glimpsed anon the paling moon low in the west. A semi-indistinct twilight played upon the strand before us and upon the hills in our rear, though the Hollow still brooded in heavy gloom. 'Twas a ghostly, wierd half-light, rendered more ghostly still by a thin coating of snow that lay sifted over the cold-gripped earth. The wind had died down consider-

ably and only a few scattering flakes now drifted through the air.

The wave-clamor was nigh deafening. From far back amongst the hills resounded the angry bellow. All along the reach of the low shore line they thundered, flinging themselves desperately upon the beach and roaring with ponderous accents; while out across the mighty bosom of the Great Lake, the enormous billows lifted and tossed themselves high in fantastic silhouette against the rifted clouds of the western horizon.

Martha slept in my arms. I pressed a kiss upon her forehead, then turned in search of Moccasin. He was nowhere near, and, for a long time, I gazed in all directions in quest of him before I at last brought him into view, indistinct in the half twilight, far downshore and kneeling. Luxor stood beside him, but I was unable to make out that which they gave their attention—something outstretched upon the sand. But even as I bent my interest upon them, from close to the foot of the bluff behind them, two figures stole out upon the beach.

I recognized the Breeds. As they discerned Moccasin they paused, and, I could see them turn to one another, and, standing close, converse for a

moment together, then as with apprehension I watched them, they cautiously slouched back to the base of the bluff where they seemed screened from my view by a clump of small poplar.

Meanwhile I had awakened Martha, and well could we afford to loose no time in going to Moccasin. Dread of the Breeds filled me with grave concern. But as, after a while, the two of us came up to Moccasin, I discerned instantly their bent in spying thus upon him as he knelt upon the sand.

Lying in piteous attitude upon the beach, a woman's body had been cast by the waves. As I dropped upon my knees beside her, horror-struck with the tragedy of the thing, I saw at once she was but middle-aged and beautiful in the extreme. Her drenched clothing wrapped close her well molded form. She was dressed entirely in black, and across her death-pallored brow still draped a heavy veil, in position perfect as in life. I lifted carefully and reverently its thickness and could but start as the miniature eye—black, glittering and feverishly blood-shot—glared into mine. I heard Martha cry in surprise and wonder, and the usually apathetic Moccasin uttered a low grunt as he looked down upon the dreaded emblem. Then I gently released the

veil and it fell back, to guard its secret once more.

"I would to God I knew where to find Bruce," I added after a pause.

"He bears this same mark upon his chest," suggested Martha softly. "What can it mean?"

"Naught but that this woman is none other than his mother," I ventured conclusively.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE INSCRIPTION.

I REMAINED kneeling for some little time, Martha opposite me, between us, the dead woman, and Moccasin silent and stern on my right. Suddenly I saw her bend close over the victim of the waves—bend close in order that her eye-sight might penetrate the confusing gloom of prescient dawn. Her fingers fumbled at the woman's throat. An instant later she handed across to me a chain and a locket of gold. I took it, examined it, pried at opening it, then gave it back without comment.

"I can feel writing upon it, Dave," she exclaimed, awed tremor in her voice, "the thing's neither hinged nor does it clasp. I believe its solid and does not open. Engraving covers the entire outside. Oh, that this light were stronger that we might read!"

"Come, Moccasin, I directed. We must carry her to some better shelter than this. Back there where we just spent the night, back there at the mouth of the Hollow, will be the most suitable spot

of any around here. Lend a hand, Moccasin, and help me."

Solemnly we gathered her between us and slowly trudged back to the gap on the bluff. Wreckage everywhere lay strewn along the shore. I surveyed the tumultuous waves where the vessel had gone to pieces upon the bar, and naught but a ragged snag of bulwark lifted to view above the combers.

In an ordinary run of weather the creek, as it emerged from out the dense foliage at the mouth of the Hollow, generally sank its waters into the loose sand of the beach; but this morning, flush with last night's heavy rains, it swept from out the gully in a veritable river, emptying its muddy flow directly into the lake. We were close to the south of it, on the same bank that my recent strange experiences had transpired. Although I knew we were but shortly from the spot of my captivity, the spot where last I had seen Bruce, I could come to no determination as to what effort it were best to put forth in order to find him and apprise him of this grim tragedy of the storm. Whether to call, whether to wait till daylight, or whether to start search for him, —search that darksome, horror-infected gully with this wierd semi-light hovering over all, and this thin

sift of snow besides, search its all but impenetrable thickets with danger and hostility lurking within every bush—I recoiled inwardly at the thought. Yet how—for he must be found! I nerved myself for the ordeal. I turned and addressed Moccasin, consulting him and asking his assistance.

“Let the other pale-face’s medicine save him if he will,” he returned doggedly. “His own medicine is big, though it is bad. Has not the Son-of-my-Brother seen enough to satisfy his young heart for one night? Must he still walk the same paths walked by those of bad medicine? If he must, then even the mighty medicines of the great Topinabe may not save him from his enemies. If he must, then let him go. But the medicines of the Pottawattamies like not to be sport for the accursed of the Miamas.”

“Look here, Moccasin,” I retorted, provoked at his obstinacy, “let me ask you this: Is the ghost of a Miama more powerful than the spirit of an Ottawa? Can the ghosts of two Miamas be more powerful than the spirit of one Ottawa, if the spirit of that Ottawa be the spirit of the greatest warrior your people have ever known. Answer me! Which is the stronger?”

“There is but one Ottawa who ruled among my people and was mighty,” he replied. “And the Otter was not accursed. Instead the Manitou’s ears were always open to his councils. He uttered the laws of the Great Spirit and understood the voice of the thunder. The Otter hated the Miamas. They were a tribe of cowardly curs. But the Great Spirit’s heart was warm towards them. He loved them more than he even loved the brave and warlike Pottawatamies. An Ojibway daughter of the Pottawattamies betrayed the Otter. The tribe suffered for the deed. Pontiac cursed her. She cursed the tribe. No more are they a race of warriors. They are a tribe of wanderers. They were Pontiac’s children and he loved them. Two Miama Ghosts are more powerful than many Pottawattamies. But the spirit of the greatest of the Ottawas is powerful even unto the Manitou. Why does the Son of my Brother ask?”

“Because there is not and never has been anything such as a Miama Ghost in the Hollow. The track still lies in the forest, but no Miama is it who leaves that trail. I do not gainsay but that another spirit does lurk about, for I have seen with my own eyes. If the Otter is mighty even unto the Great

Manitou himself, then your medicines, Moccasin, are worth just so much dirt. She of the track, commands him in life as she will in death. But I suspect that before long he shall again see—see to find his way unto the Happy Hunting Grounds. ‘The other paleface,’ as you just now termed him, Moccasin, has no medicine, either good or bad. Last night he lost to Pontiac’s gain. Yet Pontiac has not yet gained all. If he gains again, he can then depart in peace to the great hereafter of your people and rule as of old among his subjects. Come, do you still refuse to accompany me?”

“Son of my Brother speaks with the wisdom of a sooth-sayer. How does he know so much?”

“Believe me or not, as you will. I’ve stated cold facts. If you’re going with me, then come—but no—stay here. Martha must not be left here. Luxor will follow me. ‘Lux,’ come. Good-bye Martha, girl! I’ll be back soon.”

“Don’t risk it, Dave; please! Yet—yet Bruce must be found. Let me go with you. Let Moccasin guard here alone. With Luxor along, no harm can befall us. Moccasin, will you stay?”

“My daughter is stout of heart. She fears nothing, even by night. She may go for no harm

shall overtake her. She is safe for she is brave. The Otter loved stout hearts. Go, Nin-don-son, for your heart is stout."

In the cold gray of dawn we watched Moccasin quietly seat himself upon the sand beside the corpse and drooping his head forward, stare fixedly at the pale-face upturned to the dim light. Then silently we turned and started upon our uncertain search.

Back into the soul-depressing gloom of that loathe some gully we groped our way, beating with difficulty our passage through the dense coverts that edged the swollen creek. I held in mind, as best I could, the location of yesterday's uncanny scenes. I led, Martha silently following, one hand in mine, and I believe the most nerved of us two. Luxor stalked nonchalantly arear, and it occurred to me that I was wholly unarmed and on precarious quest, until, as we neared our wanted destination, suddenly knowledge of my helplessness laid possession of me. It required every iota of my will power to muster courage to proceed and voice no such alarm to Martha.

We had covered some goodly distance by now and I knew we were close unto our wanted destination—when commingling with the dull sighing of

the wind and the rustling of the foliage, a low groaning drifted to our ears. We both started with one accord, and stopping short, turned to one another. Even Luxor shifted his stub ears and drew himself into harkening posture. That the groaning came from not far away was self evident and though the thing sent a chill over us, 'twas but for a moment, till, guided by it, we bore in its direction. 'Twas but a few steps—a few steps of cautiously slinking forward without creating the slightest disturbance amidst that darksome underbrush—that as we crept stealthily towards the groaning—groaning which came incessantly and without variation of accent from out the darkness underneath the heavy shrubbery—that unexpectantly a voice spoke from the gloom.

“Lux, good old dog! My God, I knew you'd find me!”

For past us Luxor had slipped, unbeknown to us, and with a thankful heart I recognized the voice of the sufferer.

“Bruce,” I spoke, “we're here. What ails you, man—are you suffering?”

“Bundy,” he answered, “you've saved me again. Great God, how I've prayed you'd come! They all but put the finish to my tether this time sure.

Here, I need your help a bit. God, my neck's broken!"

I stumbled forward in the darkness, and groped about blindly with my hands as he directed me. I strained and twisted at those hateful thongs, yet even with Martha's assistance, we wrenched not one from its firm anchoring.

"Who is this with you, Dave? Is it Dominique?"

"It's I, Bruce, your sister. Oh, you poor boy!"

She ceased endeavoring to release him and instead slipped around to his head and held it in her lap to ease the torture of his neck. For suspended by all fours—suspended by bonds wrapped about both wrists and ankles—Bruce hung suspended above the ground between four straining saplings, his head hanging from his shoulders in distressing attitude, the strength of his neck having long since given way. But without a sharp instrument with which to free him, I wrestled in vain with his fetters.

"How far are we from where we were last together, Bruce?" I asked. "How far from this spot?"

"Through the lace-work of those leaves I can see it's growing light. If you'll go where my left arm is pointing, Dave, you'll find we are on the edge of our

last night's bivouac. Just step outside this brush and you're there. But why do you ask?"

"Because your pen-knife is buried there and we need it. I'm going, but I'll be back at once."

And I left them together, Martha and Bruce, Luxor with them; alone I broke through the encircling brush into the open of our late bivouac. I stood for a moment and gazed about the place, gazed down the Hollow to where, glimpsed through the gap, the white-frothed waters of the lake lay like a snow clad prairie in the distance; gazed above into the cloud-darkened heavens that brooded low above the snow-drifted hills; gazed up the steep slide of the mountain as it towered white and cold above me,—a bulk, heartless and austere. A cold qualm settled at my heart and I turned from this view of a desolate world and started in search for that small pearl prize, hidden somewhere, I knew, hereabout in the sand. I conjured my brain to remember the exact spot in which we had knelt when surreptitiously I had eased it from his grasp and thrust it beneath the then dry and loose sand, which now was dampened with the snow and well nigh compact. I dug about for some time before finally it came into the feel of my fingers. Then straight-

way back into the brush I turned once more to them, but before I had slashed in twain the cords, Bruce addressed me, and there was fear and awe couched in his tone, lest other ears than wanted ones should hear.

“Dave, my gun you’ll find if you but search thoroughly where I stood before felled. I doubt if they carried it off. She allows no handling or carrying of weapons other than knives. Hunt it, boy! We may need it yet. Let Martha cut these ribbons. Don’t spare the time yourself.”

Slipping the knife into Martha’s hand as she still held Bruce’s head in his agony, leaving her to deliver him from his awful captivity, I found my way back to the cleared space and commenced my futile search for Bruce’s revolver. I sought it in the deceitful light of that slow-growing dawn, down upon both hands and knees, straining my eyesight into piercing, the confusing gloom, until suddenly a strange, indescribable sensation held possession of me, pinioning me powerless as I knelt. My senses whirled away as with a draft of air. A disquieting sense as of peculiar emptiness crept over me, a careless realization of the incompleteness of things, a sense as though the earth had been snatched from beneath

me and that I drifted aimlessly through space and interminable oblivion, while, at the same time, I seemed clasped within some ponderous pressure and slowly being pressed to nothingness. I could not command myself in the least—I could not even so much as lift my head to look about me. Yet during it all, I knew well that I knelt—that I was kneeling there in that haunted spot of my recent occupancy, and that this unaccountable inebriation possessed me. A distorted vision was whirling before my eyes—a vision of home.

Flashes from our old fire-place were playing upon the somber dusk of our home living room. Kneeling in devoted service, I saw my mother in the center of the floor, little Mary clasped endearingly to her bosom, and I could trace the words, every one, as they flowed from her lips in a travail of despair. I recognized that beautiful and beloved of all utterances, the Lord's Prayer—though scarce had I recognized its divine solace when abruptly my vision changed. I saw before me a creature, terrible beyond all power of words. Hunched to a sinister posture, it clutched in its bony fingers the beautiful head of a young woman upon whose breast slept peacefully a fair infant. The cruel eyes of the

creature gloated with savage exultation into the shrinking ones of the mother, while with a pointed instrument, it pricked and worked at the ashy white forehead of the victim. Then the child and creature vanished, and the woman alone was aught that remained of my vision, and she lay dead upon the beach. My vision vanished. My hypnotic spell dispersed. I heard a loud, masculine voice thundering about me; I heard a wild cackle flout his words; I heard a low growl which I recognized. I lifted up my eyes and looked. And as I looked, a shiver of horror and fear shook me through like an ague. I remained powerless to regain my feet, and all I could do was to kneel, look and listen. For close upon me, close above me, almost within touch of me, stood Onawago. Clad in all the barbarity of her medicine dress, a mere ghost of her former self she seemed, so withered, shrunken and ill-proportioned was she, with her naked body abhorrent with skin-wrapped bones and cadaverous beneath the wierd half light of dawn. About her loins wrapped a cloth of crimson feathers, while rope after rope of strung teeth draped her detestable figure. Her long gray hair fluttered in the wind and coiled and twisted its oily strands about her ghastly visage. Her un-

couth jaws were writhed in a leering grin and the snag of one yellow tooth lay bared to view by the parted lips. Her eyes were glowering wickedly from within their sunken sockets. while standing out villainously from between her withered breasts, the totem-eye glared steadfastly forward, a-twinkle as with fiendish delight, black, glittering, and feverishly blood-shot, while swinging loosely above the virulent totem-eye, suspended by a string of iridescent shells, dangled an odd, acorn-shaped thing; I shuddered at the knowledge of its identity.

“Back, you fiend! You devil! Back, I say! Touch him and I’ll snap your vile head off your shoulders. Think not that you longer have supremacy over him, witch that you are! Helpless now are you even as that thing you wear! A fig for your incantation of that night! The ears I burned; but, one life of them remained, and yet remains. Just so long as that dog may breathe, thou art checked. Hear me? I again say it,—thou art checked! Understand? You’re powerless, I say, powerless—powerless till this dog shall die. Mighty, Marvelous, Mystic, Magic, Bloody, Wierd, Peculiar—but hag, there is no ‘tragic’—till this dog shall die. Now

hag, witch, Indian thief, even unto me, what think you now!"

I huddled spellbound, though I forgot for the nonce my erstwhile fear, for now I, knew, at last, the relation of Luxor's life to my own.

I recall the shriek arising from far away among the hills, then slowly growing as with the coming of the winds until from out the air above us, the cry broke piercing upon the protracted silence which had fallen upon us. Onawago had thrown herself in agonized attitude, one hand over her eyes, the other fighting, I say, aye, for unless I were deceived by that which mine eyes beheld, other hands than her own were striving for possession of the acorn trinket. I saw two wraith-like hands and the tall wraith-like figure of a magnificent warrior evolve almost immediately. When I looked once more, no acorn-like trinket dangled between her withered breasts. Pontiac had taken departure to the great hereafter, to the blessed realms of his people. I was cowed, awed, at witnessing the transpiration of it all.

'Twas now that I noticed a dark form slinking forward, crouched low to earth and flat upon its belly; watched it worm itself cautiously toward On-

awago and slinking yet closer to earth, gather himself in preparation for a spring. Simultaneously and with an obvious effort she collected herself, and, for a moment, fixed her keen eyes with a maddened fascination down upon the crouching Luxor at her feet. While through the morning air rang her taunting laugh, wavering in undulating cadences down the sullen Hollow.

Shrinking, as from a blow and recoiling involuntarily before her, I slunk backwards into the brush-edge as I saw her—saw her with fawn-like agility, leap suddenly backward and dropping upon all fours, face Luxor with a snarl of rage guttering in her throat. More the wolf than the human incarnate she seemed; and I noted with a fleeting observance, that her knees as well as her hands and feet trod upon the earth, constituting six in all.

That which followed, in my memory, is wrapped in dull blur. I caught but little of the detail of the thing, so rapid and changeable did it take place. I looked upon that scene enacted there before me with a sickening clutch upon my heart and a sickening, surging pulsing throughout me. I heard a low, ominous growl vented by them with one accord, and I saw them spring and rush upon each other

like veritable beasts which they were. I heard Luxor's fangs clash incisively and I could see him tearing furiously at her unprotected throat as he bore down and I heard the snarl in his throat slowly die away; while bursting from her lips in loud crescendo, the terrific squall of the panther slowly throbbed away in the distance. Then all was still. Two lifeless bodies were what we found them, fast grappled in death.

A faintness overswept me and I sank prone upon the sand, though retaining, to an extent, my consciousness. I heard Bruce go to them, and at the same time, I felt two dear arms clasp me close and tenderly, and, as I lifted my eyes to hers, the light of the dawn was stronger in the east, rendering everything about us more distinct in detail; and, with the knowledge of the light, the memory of the locket flashed into my mind.

"Martha," I bade her, "give it to him. God grant he learns what he yearns to know!"

As she slipped quietly forward and across to Bruce, and as she handed it to him, I saw him start, and, half rising from his stooping posture, stare hard and long at the thing, holding it close before him in the dim light. Oft and again his lips moved, at-

tempting speech, but his voice forsook him, until, drawing up with a gallant command over himself and standing fully erect, he read with wild abstraction for a moment, then clasped the locket affectionately to his breast. But by now Martha was returned to me, and together we crouched and watched him as he read and realized. Then at length he spoke aloud:

“Where—where did this come from? Speak, fools! Can’t you see I’m dying to learn? Where—when—who—”

“By the storm, Bruce,” Martha answered. “Woman cast up by the waves. Moccasin guards her even now. You’ll find them at the mouth of the creek. Go—but first read it to us.”

His voice bore dry and husky in dull monotone, as slowly he read, and its every word burned itself indelibly into my memory.

“I, Ruth Long, am bent upon strange quest. This, should aught mishap me, doth bear me witness. Dating from the siege of Detroit, at which the founder of our family was a subordinate officer of the garrison, dating from then, a malicious fate hath decreed that the first-born of our family shall either die or mysteriously disappear. My eldest offspring,

a man-child, did this latter, October seventh, eighteen thirty-eight. One clue alone I have, and I am now bent upon my strange quest. May God aid me to find my child, Bruce Long."

Without a word, we watched him raise his head in triumph, raise his eyes to the heavens above, and, lifting his arms on high, cry in a piercing voice: "God be praised!" Then suddenly he turned and tore his way into the brush, bound lakeward and to the mouth of the creek, while slowly we arose and together began our painful trudge up the long, gradual acclivity of the great sand mountain, on our homeward way. And naught but once did either of us speak.

"Dave," she said, "I'll never leave the woods now—nor you."

THE END.



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